

VISION FOR AGRICULTURE[®]

To chart a way forward for agriculture in Zimbabwe, under the rule of law, with emphasis on security of tenure, and including a sustainable agrarian reform programme, to ensure economic and social recovery for the benefit of all Zimbabweans.

1. Land Resettlement and its Aftermath

Background

The Riddell Commission (1981) signalled the beginning of land use reorganisation in the communal areas and the acquisition of commercial farms for resettlement. When the resettlement programme faltered in the late 1980s, the government passed the Land Acquisition Act (1992) to enable it to acquire commercial farms more readily in better farming areas. The government then appointed a Land Tenure Commission (1994) to inform its land reform policy. However, the Commission's recommendation were not implemented and progress on land resettlement stagnated throughout the 1990s. With the assistance of the international community, a Land Conference was held in September 1998 to resuscitate the land reform and resettlement programme. This initiative soon lost momentum, and the resettlement programme once again lay dormant.

'Fast Track' Resettlement

The spark that ignited the government-sponsored land invasions – and that anticipated government's fast-track resettlement programme – was the rejection of its draft constitution in a referendum of February 2000. Since then, white commercial farmers and their workers have been under siege by war veterans, ruling party supporters and, more recently, by the ruling party elite. The law has been ignored or selectively applied. The police have failed to act against lawlessness or protect victims of violence. They, the army, and even judges, have themselves acted unlawfully by taking possession of farms, equipment and property to which they had no right. This impunity was buttressed by a series of laws and edicts of dubious constitutionality to dispossess farmers without compensation. Today, most white commercial farmers have been driven from their farms, commercial agricultural production has collapsed, workers have lost their livelihoods and their access to basic social services. Nearly half of the country's population remains dependent on food aid.

[®] Vision for Agriculture is a trust registered in Zimbabwe.

The Bhuka Report

The government's own interim Land Audit Report (2003) by Flora Bhuka, the Minister of State for the Land Reform Programme, criticised: i) the displacement of newly resettled farmers by powerful political elites; ii) multiple ownership of farms by these elites; and iii) huge swathes of highly productive farmland that has not been allocated and that is lying idle.

2. Restoration of the Rule Of Law

Vision for Agriculture believes that agricultural recovery can only proceed once an internationally recognised transitional government restores the rule of law and rescinds those laws that deny citizens their constitutional and human rights. Agricultural recovery is therefore dependent upon:

- A return to constitutionality and the full adherence to internationally accepted human rights enshrined in Zimbabwe's constitution that entitles every person, whatever his race or political persuasion, to freedom of expression and association and the right to the protection of the law of their person, home and other property.
- Re-establishing the independence of the judiciary, abiding by ruling by competent courts, enforcing the law without fear or favour, and protecting every person and their property.

3. Building Trust through Dialogue

In anticipation of the establishment of the transitional government and a restoration of the rule of law, Vision for Agriculture has initiated a process of dialogue to build trust and reach consensus on the precepts, principles and policies that will support the full and sustainable recovery of agriculture in Zimbabwe. Its aim has been to encourage farmers to maintain agricultural production and to sustain its infrastructure; support a fair, transparent and effective land reform and redistribution programme; and facilitate the adoption of land tenure systems that offer security of tenure to all farmers to promote agricultural investment and productivity.

The dialogue process

Vision for Agriculture is as much a process as it is an organisation. It is a process that attempts to reach across boundaries that have divided Zimbabweans for too long. The most obvious is the racial divide that has beset the whole land debate. But it is also the gender divide that restricts women's right to land in the communal areas. It is the divide between people who farm small parcels of land side-by-side with those who own much larger farms. We intend to initiate a process that brings together Zimbabwean farmers and their organisations to work through the contradictions of our respective value systems, and find solutions that give substance to our collective hopes and endeavours. Being part of this process is to belong to the vision for agriculture.

Rules of engagement

Like any process, there are rules of engagement. The first prerequisite is participating in good faith, in a spirit of compromise, and with a commitment to see *all* Zimbabwean farmers benefit from the growth in productivity that agricultural recovery and reform promise. We intend to begin by seeking points of agreement where co-operation, confidence and trust can be built. The foundations of a benevolent society, we believe, lie in a democratic process; in a policy of inclusiveness of various stakeholders; in a respect for the rights and welfare of citizens; and by the application of certain basic economic principles in the way countries are managed.

The second prerequisite is an agreed framework for dialogue that allows the building of consensus and which defines the rules and the arena to contest differences in approach on the way forward. We believe that this framework is best constructed by finding common ground on a basic set of precepts and principles.

Goodwill and a sound framework for discussion are essential. But we also need 'content', i.e. the issues to be discussed. The third prerequisite, then, is to review the literature, evaluate our experience and commission new studies, whose conclusions and recommendations can form the basis for further debate and an informed policy decision-making process. Throughout this exercise the need for intellectual integrity and a respect for rigorous methods of inquiry remains paramount. We not only need to learn from the lessons of our own experience, but those of other countries that have succeeded.

4. The Road to Recovery

A Short Term Recovery Programme

Our first study, *Emergency Food Production Programme: A Pilot Project for Agricultural Recovery in Zimbabwe*, outlines a recovery plan as soon as an internationally acceptable political settlement had been reached. The prime objective of the programme is to feed a hungry people, thus allowing international assistance to be diverted towards pressing agricultural development needs. The recovery programme involves revitalising the communal areas and bringing idle farmland back into production by deploying the skills of displaced farmers and farm-workers, as well as integrating new, young and qualified farmers into the mainstream of commercial agricultural production. In particular, the programme seeks to re-build the livelihoods of thousands of displaced farm-workers and their families, who could return to their jobs and accommodation if they so wish, and regain access to social services such as schools, clinics and other basic services.

It now seems unlikely that the recovery of agriculture will begin during the 2003/04 season. The study does, however, provide a platform for the recovery which could be scaled up to include the remainder of the country, and deepened to include a land audit to assess the current occupation of land and land rights. In the meantime we hope to develop a more detailed farm input delivery plan for the communal areas and

a organisational framework to channel international funds quickly and effectively to bring farms back into production at the earliest possible opportunity.

A Land Audit

As a result of the government's 'fast track' land reform programme, an impartial land audit has become essential to document the changes in agricultural land since January 2000 in terms of possession and legality. Its purpose is to gather relevant and reliable data for policy makers to make informed decisions to resolve the current land crisis, and to provide a platform for crafting a sustainable land reform and resettlement programme. It will be an account of how, when and which farmers lost their land, and how, when and by whom the land was taken over.

This exercise would bring together i) the expertise developed during a similar exercise in Matabeleland through Habakkuk Trust; ii) existing digital GIS mapping database that has been created for all commercial farmland; iii) information held by the Commercial Farmers Union and Justice for Agriculture; and iv) methods of data collection developed by Vision for Agriculture during our study for an emergency food production programme. The audit would take shape by developing a general framework and by entering all the available baseline data – such as the farm's location, name, size, legal status, and so on. As the rule of law returns to Zimbabwe, it would then be possible to gather on-farm data and details of resettlement to complete the audit.

The audit would also include a review of the land and agricultural legislation within the current political context. Since March 2000, the law has been subverted. Land legislation of dubious constitutionality, together with decisions handed down by a compromised judiciary, have become so entwined with presidential fiat and the selective application of the law, that it is no longer possible – with any degree of certainty – to discern what is lawful and what is not. It will therefore be necessary to commission the services of a distinguished jurist, such as a retired Supreme Court judge, to lead a team of legal and land experts that can disentangle the interplay of political events, legislation and legal challenges. Our hope is that the team's authoritative opinion will clarify the legal status of farmers, settlers, and the land they own or occupy. Their work is essential to chart the way forward for justice to prevail, for restitution and compensation to be paid, and for a fair, efficient and sustainable land allocation and resettlement programme to become a reality.

We would commend our work to the Deeds Office or Surveyor General, or, alternatively, to a Land Board or Commission, if one were to be established.

A Land Indaba

We propose that an all-stakeholder land indaba be convened to build a national consensus on the principles, programmes and policies for land reform and resettlement. The indaba should chart the future direction, pace and process of change to bring about the full recovery of agriculture.

In the aftermath of the highly politicised and controversial ‘fast track’ land reforms, there has been a call for an independent organisation, to take a non-partisan, fair and practical long term view of land resettlement and agricultural development. The indaba would therefore also consider the need to establish a Land Board or Commission, its form and functions, and the scope of its responsibilities.

The culmination of the review process and the land indaba should be reflected in a land reform and resettlement programme that meets the requirements of all Zimbabweans committed to seeing the rebirth and growth of an agricultural industry founded on fairness, transparency and productivity.

Land Tenure

We believe that property rights to land are one of the cornerstones for the successful functioning of modern economies. This makes well-defined, secure, and transferable rights to land central to development efforts (World Bank, 2003). In keeping with these sentiments, the Rukuni Land Tenure Commission (1994) emphasised the need to maintain freehold tenure, where it existed, and recommended a policy shift towards small and medium-sized family farms under long lease with options for title in resettlement and small scale commercial farming areas. For resettlement schemes, which operate with communal grazing, it recommended that they should be given the option of being replanned and demarcated into individual, self-contained farms accommodating residential, arable and grazing land.

Strengthening poor people's land rights and easing barriers to land transactions can set in motion a wide range of social and economic benefits including improved governance, empowerment of women and other marginalised people, increased private investment and more rapid economic growth and poverty reduction. In cases where the government itself owns the land, this requires transferring ownership to the occupants and giving secure leases (World Bank, 2003). For Zimbabwe, the Rukuni Commission proposed that the state should pass full rights over land and resources to members of the village assembly (the *musha* or *izakhumizi*) and an executive (the *dare* or *inkundla*) chaired by the kraalhead. All land in the communal areas, it said, should be surveyed (using low cost techniques) starting with adjudication, mapping and formalisation of traditional villages. Thereafter, all land in villages should be surveyed and households issued with land registration certificates for residential and arable land. If these land rights could be used as collateral for credit, it would allow farmers to unlock the value of their land to invest and develop their farm plots to their full productive potential.

Secure land tenure, especially for the poor and for women, and the ability to exchange land rights at low cost, is a precondition for productivity increases in agriculture. Moreover, the use of land as a primary investment vehicle allows households to accumulate and transfer wealth between generations (World Bank, 2003). To this end, the Rukuni Commission recommended that security of tenure could be strengthened by improving the administrative mechanisms that facilitate the long-term evolution of the ‘communal’ land tenure system. It recommended that the key set of rights under ‘traditional freehold’ should be formalised to include inheritance, sub-division and

receiving compensation for loss of improvements when a household leaves a community.

Land pressure in the communal areas from both livestock and a burgeoning human population has put increasing pressure on the natural resources within the communal lands. This problem has been exacerbated by open access to these resources. The challenge facing the communal areas is to establish a land tenure framework that allows for the sustainable management of natural resources.

We think that the recommendations by the Rukuni Land Commission should be revisited and that the policy implications of its recommendations be reviewed and debated. Using the Commission's findings as a foundation, alternative policy options for the transformation of small-holders could be explored, including (but not limited to) syndicates, tenant schemes, greenbelts along the interface between communal and commercial farming areas, and out-grower programmes with centralised processing and marketing of produce. These programme should provide smallholder farmers with the opportunity to develop from subsistence farming to commercial agriculture in a meaningful way.

This review process must underline the importance of fairness, gender issues and participation in the process of rebuilding agriculture.

Rebuilding Commercial Agriculture

Many farmers and workers have not only lost their farms and livelihood, but often many of their possessions as well. Estimates are needed of the impact of the government's current policies on the agricultural sector to ascertain the losses and the cost of its policies, as well as to form a base-line on which to estimate any restitution or compensation payable. Simple criteria and rules need to be established that will enable those dispossessed to make a new start.

The cost of rebuilding will go much further than simple restitution or compensation. In the process of the government's fast track land reform programme, farm and irrigation equipment has been removed or left in disrepair, barns and houses have been destroyed, fencing has been stolen, etc. The financing of reconstruction will be an on-going process as the agricultural sector slowly finds its feet. The funding package should combine the restitution of property rights, compensation, resettlement and soft loans and grants.

5. Economic Imperatives

Macro-economic stabilisation

A crucial ingredient to re-establish agricultural viability and the conditions for economic growth will be macro-economic stabilisation policies through monetary measures that can quickly redress the imbalances in interest and foreign exchange rates. Fiscal policy must focus on carefully targeted priorities, while fundamental

economic principles must be applied to reduce poverty through broad-based economic development and to achieve the investment, employment and economic growth that Zimbabweans so palpably yearn for.

Structural Transformation

A vision for agriculture is incomplete without a vision for industry. The structural transformation of an economy requires that an increasing percentage of employment and GDP shifts from agriculture to industry and services. In most modern, advanced economies, the percentage of the population engaged in agriculture is less than 7%. In Zimbabwe it is 70%. As the engine of industrial growth gathers momentum, people begin to migrate from the country-side to take up jobs created in urban centres, thereby reducing pressure on natural resources and freeing up land for those farmers who wish to expand production to increase their incomes. By strengthening its linkages with the manufacturing and service sectors, the agricultural sector would place itself on a trajectory for sustained growth and transformation.

6. Conclusions

The success of Vision for Agriculture depends on the goodwill and support of all stakeholders – the private and public sectors, NGOs and the international community – committed to the successful re-emergence of Zimbabwe as a leader in good governance and economic prosperity. We deeply appreciate the continued assistance of those international organisations that have remained committed to the Zimbabwean people in our time of crisis. We look forward to your continued support in happier times. We invite you all to join us in shaping Zimbabwe's vision for agriculture.

References

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