

# 13

---

## Conclusion

### Occupied and Productive

"THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT AS LONG AS LAND IS RESERVED ON A RACIAL BASIS THERE will be ready arguments available to the agitator. . . . It is well recognised that the word 'land' is very often one of the slogans in revolutionary movements and it has a popular emotional appeal,"<sup>1</sup> warned the *Second Report of the Select Committee on the Resettlement of Natives in 1960*.

And so it came to pass.

"Were there to be an African government in this country—and indeed that seems inevitable, and very soon—and if the present laws which have been enacted and applied to create and preserve privilege—if these were retained and applied in reverse against the European, what a protest there would be! . . . Thousands of whites could be driven from their homes and farms without compensation," warned Catholic Bishop Donal Lamont in his speech from the dock in 1976 when he was convicted of treating guerrillas in church hospitals.<sup>2</sup>

And so it came to pass. Lamont hoped "Europeans might possibly be treated better than Africans were." But the new leaders had learned their lessons well and evicted white farmers without compensation. And as the bishop predicted, what a protest there has been!

In the biggest land reform in Africa, 6,000 white farmers have been replaced by 245,000 Zimbabwean farmers. Some settled in the 1980s, but most since 2000. These are primarily ordinary poor people who have become more productive farmers. The change was inevitably disruptive at first, but production is increasing rapidly. Agricultural production is now returning to the 1990s level, and resettlement farmers already grow 40% of the country's tobacco and 49% of its maize. As Barry Floyd noted

in his PhD thesis more than 50 years ago, “Tobacco in its growth pays scant attention to the pigment of the plowman’s skin.”<sup>3</sup>

As we’ve said earlier, it takes a generation for farmers to master their new land. White farmers, especially war veterans, had extensive support in the 1950s—and, as we saw, only a third became successful. Zimbabwe’s first land reform, in the 1980s under willing seller, willing buyer, where the former colonizers kept the best land but there was some initial support, the new farmers, on average, did well, increasing production and reducing poverty. “Resettled farmers were found to be more productive, on average, than communal farmers,” according to long-term research by Bill Kinsey, and there is “enormous scope for many farmers to catch-up to the best farmers in the sample.”<sup>4</sup>

The fast track land reform in 2000 was largely self-funded with little support, but fast track farmers had the enthusiasm of occupiers and they had finally taken the best land. On average, the fast track farmers are doing well, raising their living standards and increasing production, and over the next decade can be expected to continue growing—the best are doing very well, and a middle group is still catching up.

### **Not All the Same**

The British colonizers developed a dual agriculture system, with most people on smallholdings and a privileged group having larger farms. And they racialized the land, defining some land as “European” and some land as “African.” On the surface, the dual system and racial land definitions have continued since independence. But beneath the language of “white farmers” and “large-scale farms,” there have been changes. In terms of farm size, Zimbabweans improved on their teachers—the small farms are bigger, and the large farms are smaller—leading to better land use and increased commercial production.

Similarly, the colonial shorthand of white and black farmers is still used, but in reality neither group is homogeneous. White farmers became famous because some were highly profitable and productive. Yet, as a group, at independence, white farmers were using less than one-third of their land, and most were not doing very well—one-third were insolvent and one-third were only breaking even. The white minority fought a brutal war to maintain its privilege and power, yet after independence, many in the white community took places in the new Zimbabwe. There are still white farmers like Keith Campbell who have built good relationships

with land-reform farmers and other white Zimbabweans are involved in agri-business.

On the side of the land-reform farmers, there are the hugely successful farmers like Fanuel Mutandiro and Esther Makwara, who use every corner of their land. There are vacant plots and farmers who are doing very poorly. And there are many in between, struggling to invest and grow, sometimes supported by contract farming. The decision to maintain a large-scale farming sector accessible only to the better-off remains controversial, and some of those farms have been given to influential people. Yet even the so-called “cronies” are not homogeneous—some are sitting on the land hoping to sell or lease it, while others are highly productive and hope to get rich from farming.

### Pumpkins and Getting On With Farming

Land reform can never be neat or simple anywhere in the world. Land is a finite resource that is taken away from one group and given to another. And land reform usually takes place at times of economic and social stress

Photo 13.1 A1 farmers listen intently to a talk on maize varieties at a field day on Kiaora Farm, April 13, 2011.



or transition. Intense political and social conflicts are inevitable—from the level of setting goals and priorities down to the distribution of bags of fertilizer. These debates will continue in Zimbabwe, and many issues remain unresolved. But it is essential to step back from the loud, angry, and continuing media and political confrontations to talk to the people who have land—the actual farmers.

The most striking memory of the research for this book is how proud the fast track farmers are of their new farms. They were anxious to take us around, insisting that we see every field and hear in detail about the new tobacco barn. They were pleased with their production. All farmers insisted on giving us something, and each day we returned home with a carload of pumpkins.

Land reform has taken place under often inauspicious conditions, and with waxing and waning political support. Resettlement was driven in both the early 1980s and the late 1990s by occupations, which government leaders vociferously opposed. The 1980s land reform never had full political backing and lost most of that limited support after four years. It was done under the cloud of apartheid destabilization, lack of international assistance, serious droughts, and structural adjustment. Fast track started with occupations by war veterans in opposition to Zanu-PF and took place under the cloud of political conflict and sanctions. The 2005–8 hyperinflation, one of the worst in history, affected the new farmers as much as everyone else. What is most remarkable is that, despite the problems, farmers have made both land reforms work—creating successes on the ground despite the continuing confusion over their heads. And despite confused and changing instructions from the top, the government extension agency Agritex has provided important support to the new farmers.

The Global Political Agreement (GPA) in late 2008 and unity government in 2009 have proved vital in creating the stability needed to move forward. Dollarization in January 2009 prompted a remarkably rapid economic turnaround and has been central in allowing small farmers to obtain inputs and sell their produce.

Political tensions remain and international hostility, represented by sanctions, continues. Problems remain, particularly around environment and former farmworkers. And a huge amount of reconstruction is still required—to finish redressing the heritage of minority rule, re-create the 60,000 or more jobs lost under structural adjustment, and repair the damage hyperinflation did to the economy.

In a thoughtful 2010 essay, Sam Moyo pointed to the polarization in Zimbabwean society and “the pervasiveness of conflict-generating

behaviour across the divide,” by both domestic and international actors. He argues that the “domestic crisis over Zimbabwe’s external isolation, fueled by confrontational strategies on both sides of the divide, . . . led, since 2002, to legal restrictions on the media, NGOs and public assembly in general, foreign financing of civil society and the increased use of force (including arrest and torture).”<sup>5</sup> What is needed is “normalization.” This started with the Utefe and other commissions on land, governance reforms, and the GPA and economic changes such as dollarization and price decontrol. Moyo warns that “normalization, however, faces critical internal and external resistance, given the entrenchment of some ‘conflict entrepreneurs’ on both sides of the divide. These include those who seek a rapid, radical and comprehensive overhaul of the existing political power structure, leadership and policy process, and those in power bent on suppressing dissent.”<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, researcher Tendai Murisa, who studied farmer groups, warns that fast track resettlement areas not “receiving support from development and relief NGOs is convenient for both civil society and the state.” International civil society “can continue to dismiss the land reform process as largely benefiting politically connected elites. In the meantime the Zanu-PF dominated state remains the only active external agent in providing support.”<sup>7</sup>

The GPA and public opinion now recognize there is no going back on land reform. It may have been chaotic and ad hoc, but it will not be reversed. So it is now possible to look forward to how agriculture can be supported and all farmers promoted to produce more. Getting out of the hole caused by political tensions and hyperinflation has required so much attention that few people have been able to look at the longer-term implications of land reform. And as the liberation generation retires, the process will be steered by new people thinking about economic and social development.

Two linked issues stand out as priorities—putting the land to the best possible use and promoting investment in farming.

## Generations

Building up a farm does not happen in a week or a year; it takes a generation. But then what happens? As Kinsey notes: “The major gains from small-scale resettlement are exhausted within a single generation. Five hectares make an economically viable farm for a nuclear, not an extended family. One adult son—or daughter—can succeed the patriarch,

but the other siblings will have to move on.”<sup>8</sup> Land-reform farmers are using more of the land—compared to white farmers who only used one-third—and the intensity of use will continue to increase for another decade or more. The gains of land reform are far from exhausted. But land reform is a once-and-for-all process; there is little land left to redistribute. In addition, resettlement has not reduced land pressure in the communal areas and has only kept up with population growth—communal areas did not become more crowded, but they did not become less congested. So what happens next?

In our interviews, we saw two processes happening. In one group, one or more children were taking agricultural courses and were expecting to take over the farm and make the next productivity leap; already some were involved in running the farm—particularly with their mothers. On the other side, some war veterans and others see land reform as ensuring enough money to send their children to school and often university, but these children expect to live in the city and have no interest in farming. There is no discussion yet about how these farms are to be kept in production over the longer term.

In the short term, land reform has served a mix of social and economic objectives. For the next generation, land-reform farms cannot remain simply the survival base of a single family—they will have to be a source of jobs, both on the farm itself and in agriculture-related industries. The GPA (§5.7, 5.9) recognizes “the need to ensure that all land is used productively,” and that there is a need for a “non-partisan land audit” partly to eliminate multiple farm ownerships. Together that means resolving the land tenure issue in a way that ensures that people feel secure and invest, and that spouses and children can inherit, but that also allows unused land to be rented or reallocated.

This raises a broader issue about Zimbabwe’s future economic development. Resettlement has caused a big change in who is employed, but low-paid farm jobs are hardly appropriate for a well-educated workforce. For the next decade, resettlement farmers can probably depend on cheap labor, but that is unlikely to continue in the long term, as more suitable jobs are created elsewhere.

### **Investment**

“With no outside investment and few resources, the achievements of these new farmers were remarkable,” said Martin Plaut, Africa editor of

the BBC World Service, in a report on resettlement farmers in Masvingo.<sup>9</sup> New white farmers in the 1950s received major government support—credit, training, subsidies, and financial and technical support for new investments such as irrigation. Bill Kinsey points to the support received by the resettlement farmers in the 1980s. Yet the fast track farmers have received virtually nothing; the government has provided little money, and donors and NGOs refuse to help new farmers on formerly white land. As Ian Scoones and colleagues note, the new farmers are accumulating from below—investing their own money from salaries and off-farm activities and reinvesting farm profits. With little support and in only a decade, about one-third of the new farmers have become commercial—the same ratio as the white farmers after 30 years and the 1980s resettlement farmers after 15 years.

But new farmers are still constrained by cash, power, and markets. Dollarization meant that by 2011 inputs and equipment were available, but with no support and little credit, seriously undercapitalized new farmers cannot afford to buy what they know they need. The most successful farmers could do better, while the potential of the farmers in the middle is huge.

Another problem is electricity. Profitability requires two crops a year, which demands irrigation, and electricity supplies are too unstable. This has blocked the revival of wheat, for example. The problem is lack of investment in electricity supplies over two decades caused by both adjustment and hyperinflation.

The third problem is marketing. Tobacco, cotton, and some other crops have assured markets—through contracts and auctions—while the huge demand for feed guarantees a market for soya. But staples, particularly maize, depend on the Grain Marketing Board, which is still the most important buyer for small producers and a major supplier of inputs. It, too, is under-capitalized and is often late in making payments.

New farmers have done remarkably well on their own. Whether it has been mortgaging houses in Harare or bringing cattle from communal areas, they have found the resources to get started. Giving support to resettlement farmers would give them the capital needed to propel many of them into being successful small and medium commercial farmers.

In chapter 3, we noted that during the UDI era, each white farm had a subsidy and loans, in current money, of about \$40,000 per year—in addition to huge extension support and guaranteed markets, tightly controlled by the state. In chapter 8, we estimated that that was equivalent

to \$80–\$130 per arable hectare. Also in chapter 8, we saw that necessary annual investment for an A1 farmer was \$100 to \$790 per arable hectare for seed, fertilizer, plowing, and so on, depending on the crop. So the UDI subsidy and loans were close to the minimum investment needed for an A1 farm. Thus, the Ian Smith UDI government was right—to build a group of successful farmers, basic annual investment costs had to be subsidized, credit had to be cheap, and inputs had to be backed up by extension and markets.

Another way to project the investment need is to use the chapter 8 estimate that the UDI subsidy was equivalent to \$500–\$800 per A1 farm and \$10,000 per A2 farm. Given to all 245,000 resettlement farmers, that would be \$340–\$400 mn per year; some of this could be low-interest loans for capital investments.

“The few examples of large-scale land reform (such as those in Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Taiwan, China) were implemented under strong pressure from the international community and with its financial support,” notes a 2010 World Bank study on Zimbabwe land reform.<sup>10</sup> “Clearly the national interests that the government of Zimbabwe sought to address with the Fast Track program did not coincide with the interests of the dominant international agenda. Therefore the programme could not be underwritten ideologically and financially.” But the report also stresses that the government “should allocate more resources to the agricultural sector,” and that credit and investment, particularly in irrigation, are essential. Nevertheless, even the World Bank thinks Zimbabwe is on its own.

But Zimbabwe does have extensive mineral resources, which could be invested. *Economist* estimates Zimbabwe could earn \$1–\$2 bn per year from diamonds.<sup>11</sup> In a parliamentary statement in August 2011, Finance Minister Tendai Biti said that diamonds that recently sold for \$167 mn actually had a value of \$1.5 bn, and thus more than \$1.3 bn in diamond money had gone missing.<sup>12</sup> If the unity government can capture the mineral revenue, then there will be sufficient money to invest in land-reform farmers—and in linked agro-industry.

### **Impressions**

It is the images that stick in the mind—walking into living rooms of both A1 farmers and elite A2 farmers to find the furniture has been moved out and the room filled with sacks of maize and groundnuts, or noting



that money has been used to buy machinery rather than new furniture or a fancy car.

These are educated, high-tech farmers. A1 farmers have mobile phones even if they have no electricity, they know the varieties of hybrid maize and which fertilizers and pesticides go with them, and they plow with oxen and tractors—these are not hoe farmers as one would see across the border in Mozambique. A2 farmers are using the Internet to check on animal feed and crops and to arrange export contracts. And we heard two things repeatedly at both A1 and A2 levels—“farming is a business” and “you must have a plan.” Farming is difficult anywhere, facing the vagaries of markets and weather, but the good farmers—small and large—are doing their sums and thinking long term. They know they have had these farms for a decade or less, and there is still a lot to do.

For Zimbabweans, it is not the land itself that is important, but farming. Agriculture is seen as a means of betterment and accumulation, and people are prepared to work at it and get their hands dirty. For ordinary A1 farmers, increased production provides a better house and better life for themselves and their children. For the best A1 farmers, maize or tobacco or soya gives them higher profits than the salary of a teacher or civil servant. And for A2 farmers, there is the potential for serious money that will come, not from land speculation, but from growing crops and cattle. And farmers were angry when they pointed out the unused and underused plots—A1 plottolders who still lived in Harare and A2 cell phone farmers or cronies speculating in land—because the empty land stood out like sore thumbs amid the other productive farms.

The farmers’ attitudes were matched by the approach of researchers. Zimbabwe is the most literate country in Africa, and the University of Zimbabwe has a high standard of research. But more than that, we were struck by the willingness of researchers to go out to rural areas and spend long days there, sometimes interviewing hundreds of farmers. Research is not something they do just sitting at a desk; researchers, too, are willing to get their hands dirty. This book would have been impossible without the high-quality research already done by Zimbabweans—and their willingness to share. We came away not just with pumpkins, but with many papers and research reports as well.

The final impression is just how quickly Zimbabweans are recovering from the hyperinflation era, and how outsiders (even Zimbabweans abroad) have missed that change. The introduction of the US dollar as currency in January 2009 brought an end to one of the world’s worst hyperinflations and brought a return of economic life much more quickly

than many expected. In May 2011, when we did much of our fieldwork, the Harare supermarkets were packed with goods and shoppers, and farmers were selling their maize and tobacco to pay school fees and buy seed. Of course, there are not enough dollars—physically, in the sense that the dollar bills handed over at the toll booths on the roads out of Harare are tattered and dirty, and economically, in that most people remain poor and farmers are under-capitalized. Nevertheless, in a remarkable way Zimbabweans have moved on—the economy seems “normal” and people talk about the hyperinflation time only if you ask.

Thus, outside commentators tend to underestimate two aspects of Zimbabwe. The first is the tie to the land and farming, even for academics and elites. The other is the speed of the recovery under dollarization, itself a testament to the resilience and creativity of Zimbabweans, but also showing that the economic crisis of 2005–8 was caused by hyperinflation and not land reform.

Zimbabwe’s land reform has not been neat, and huge problems remain. But 245,000 new farmers have received land, and most of them are farming it. They have raised their own standard of living; have already reached production levels of the former white farmers; and, with a bit of support, are ready to substantially increase that production.

In 1952, Godfrey Huggins, prime minister of Southern Rhodesia, said, “The ultimate possessors of the land will be the people who can make the best use of it.”<sup>13</sup> Sixty years later, this has come to pass.

## Notes

1. Malcolm Rifkind, “The Politics of Land in Rhodesia” (MSc thesis, Edinburgh University, 1968), 141 [Rifkind, “Politics of Land”], citing Jack Quinton, *Second Report of the Select Committee on the Resettlement of Natives*, 1960, ¶216, 217, available at <http://www.met.open.ac.uk/zimbabwe> (June 20, 2012).

2. Donal Lamont, *Speech From the Dock* (Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, UK: Keven Mayhew, 1997), 65.

3. Barry Floyd, “Changing Patterns of African Land Use in Southern Rhodesia” (PhD thesis, Syracuse University, 1959) (Lusaka, Zambia: Rhodes-Livingstone Institute), 345.

4. Bill Kinsey, “Zimbabwe’s Land Reform Program: Underinvestment in Post-conflict Transformation,” *World Development*, 32, no. 10 (2004): 1684 [Kinsey, 2004].

5. Sam Moyo, “The Zimbabwe Crisis, Land Reform, and Normalization,” in *The Struggle Over Land in Africa*, ed. Ward Anseeuw and Chris Alden (Cape Town, South Africa: Human Sciences Research Council, 2010), 246, 249.

6. Ibid., 257, 261.
7. Tendai Murisa, "Farmer Groups, Collective Action and Production Constraints: Cases From A1 Settlements in Goromonzi and Zvimba," *Livelihoods After Land Reform in Zimbabwe*, Working Paper 10, 2010, <http://www.lalr.org.za/zimbabwe/zimbabwe-working-papers-1> (April 28, 2012).
8. Kinsey, 2004, 1689.
9. Martin Plaut, "Crossing Continents: Farming Zimbabwe," BBC Radio 4, December 1 and 5, 2011, available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b017mvx6#synopsis> (accessed December 6, 2011).
10. Simon Pazvakavambwa and Vincent Hungwe, "Land Redistribution in Zimbabwe," in *Agricultural Land Redistribution: Toward Greater Consensus*, ed. Hans Binswanger-Mkhize, Camille Bourguignon, and Rogerius van den Brink (Washington, DC: World Bank Publications, 2009), 160–61.
11. "Zimbabwe and Its Diamonds: Forever Dirty," *Economist*, June 30, 2011, available at <http://www.economist.com/node/18898238> (January 5, 2012).
12. Clemence Manyukwe, "Diamonds Worth US\$1bn Missing," *Financial Gazette*, August 12, 2011, available at <http://eu.financialgazette.co.zw/national-report/9417-diamonds-worth-us1bn-missing.html> (January 5, 2012).
13. Rifkind, "Politics of Land," 106, citing *Rhodesia Herald*, May 22, 1952.