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Agricultural Policy Research in Africa

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY
OF AGRICULTURAL COMMERCIALISATION IN ZIMBABWE

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Working Paper

WP|12
April 2018

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAG	Affirmative Action Group
AIAS	African Institute for Agrarian Studies
ARDA	Agricultural and Rural Development Authority
ASPEF	Agricultural Support Productive Enhancement Facility
BIPPA	Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement
BOT	Build-operate-transfer
BSAC	British South Africa Company
CA	Communal area
CFU	Commercial Farmers' Union
CMB	Cotton Marketing Board
CSC	Cold Storage Commission
DDF	District Development Fund
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
EU	European Union
FTLPR	Fast-Track Land Reform Programme
GMB	Grain Marketing Board
GNU	Government of National Unity
IBDC	Indigenous Business Development Centre
IBWO	Indigenous Business Women Organisation
IFI	International financial institution
IRDP	Irrigation Rehabilitation and Development Programme
ISP	Input Support Programme
JOC	Joint Operations Command

LRRP	Land Reform and Resettlement Programme
LSCF	Large-scale commercial farm
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
ORA	Old resettlement area
PPP	Public-private partnership
PSF	Productive Sector Facility
PSIP	Public Sector Investment Programme
RBZ	Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe
ROT	Rehabilitate-operate-transfer
SMPP	Special Maize Production Programme
SSCF	Small-scale commercial farm
TILCOR	Tribal Trust Land Development Corporation
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People’s Union
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZFU	Zimbabwe Farmers’ Union

CONTENTS

SUMMARY

Debates on Zimbabwe's agricultural development have centred on different framings of agriculture viability and land redistribution, which are often antagonistic. Yet, emerging evidence of agricultural commercialisation pathways shows complex and differentiated deepening and stagnations across settlement models. Normative–political constructions of 'good', 'modern' and 'progressive', as advocated by large-scale farmers and some bureaucrats, are countered by proponents for redistribution, mainly the landless rural peasants, keen on social and economic justice as well as democratic land ownership.

Across the divide, commercialisation of agriculture is seen as efficient and poverty-reducing. This paper explores how these contrasting debates have played out in Zimbabwe over time, and what interests are aligned with different positions. The paper locates the discussion in a critical examination of the politics of agrarian change and presents a political economy and policy process review of winners and losers in commercialisation. In so doing, the paper explores power, political and institutional incentives driving commercialisation, particularly in the post-2000 period. It argues that competing interests within the state, the ruling party, opposition movements, within the agricultural bureaucracy and across fractions of capital (large-scale commercial farmers, banks, international and domestic commodity merchants linked to contract farming, and the inputs/outputs markets) have shaped land and commercialisation over time. It posits that these ongoing contests are influencing the outcomes of the land reform of 2000. This is illustrated with an examination of two value chains linked to agricultural commercialisation in Mvurwi area of Mazowe district.

1.INTRODUCTION

This paper[1] presents a critical discussion of the political economy of agricultural commercialisation in Zimbabwe, focusing on the post-2000 period. A major land redistribution exercise from that year occasioned dramatic agrarian structural transformation in the country. Agricultural commercialisation is shaped by contested ideologies, changing power dynamics, multiple actor–network interests (mainly farmers and bureaucrats) and knowledge creation in Zimbabwe. Understanding shifts in production and commodity circulation and how these have had an impact on patterns of commercialisation helps reveal how power, state practice and capital influence accumulation for the different groups of farmers in variegated settlement models, farming scales and across agro-ecological regions.

In this paper, commercialisation is defined as the process through which smallholder farmers are integrated into the use of green revolution-type inputs and commodity markets to improve rural livelihoods and incomes. Commercialisation contrasts with subsistence farming, where production is aimed at auto-consumption, utilisation of own inputs and where income is derived from non-farm activities (Jayne et al. 2013). Agricultural commercialisation is shaped by patterns by which farmers gain access to productive resources across different scales of production. For Berry (1993: 3), access to resources is 'shaped by the mobilization and exercise of power and the terms in which rights and obligations are defined' in given settings. In the case of Zimbabwe, power dynamics have been central to resource distribution in both pre- and post-colonial periods, with varying impacts on commercialisation.

The agriculture sector contributes to employment and is a major source of livelihoods for over 70 percent of the population who reside in rural areas. This is significant given the declining formal economy and absence of opportunities for formal urban employment. According to ZIMSTAT (2012), whereas 89 percent of the active population are employed, 50 percent (2,225,000) of these are in the agriculture sector. However, the source of changing patterns in employment levels in agriculture is often contested. In part, it is argued that the introduction of hi-tech equipment associated with joint ventures in medium-scale farms is contributing to the decline in employment opportunities due to reduced demand. In addition, opportunities for former farmworkers to be involved in rain-fed tobacco production and intensive horticultural production under irrigation through land rental deals have increased their choices. In any event, many of the workers are now involved in a mixture of both family labour supply, labour hiring in and labour hiring out at various stages of the seasons – a pattern which has become more prevalent in tobacco production across the settlement models. Within these changing and variegated multiple settings and actor networks, establishing a pattern in agricultural commercialisation will aid policymaking.

In Zimbabwe, as is the case across southern Africa, debates on agricultural development have frequently centred on framings around the issue of viability and the normative–political construction of 'good', 'modern' and 'progressive' farmers (Cousins and Scoones 2010). Understanding this historical context to reveal the competing actors and interests, losers and winners in agricultural commercialisation deepens our analysis of ongoing agrarian processes in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The discourse about viability characterised smallholder farming as backward, primitive and in need of improvement in southern African colonial states – a view that was pushed by white minority capital and its surrogate state from the onset of colonialism in Africa. Consequently, development efforts have sought to create a new, entrepreneurial, emergent farmer able to replicate the assumed ideal features of the large-scale commercial farmer, mainly at the behest of the World Bank and other international donors. For most Zimbabweans, without land, capital and other resources, the new commercial farms were elusive, and the country retained the dualist system of large-scale commercial agriculture and small-scale peasant agriculture, with minimal linkages between them, until the fast-track land reform of 2000.

This paper makes use of Keeley and Scoones' (2003) policy process framework to explore how power, competing discourses (over viability, modernity, and what makes for a good farm and farmer), actors and their networks (across state, party, military, farmer organisation, business grouping, donors and others) intersect with interests (political, commercial, personal, and often combinations of all). Contesting policy discourses must be seen as working in 'multiple, incremental and complex policy processes' where a 'variety of interest groups compete over policy positions' (Keeley and Scoones 2003: 24), or as a participatory approach to policy processes. Viewing policy processes as a discourse where 'ideas, concepts and categorisations' are expressed as knowledge and power (Foucault 1980) shaping world views is critical for understanding and revealing 'continuous interplays of discourses, political interests and the agency of multiple actors' (Keeley and Scoones 2003: 38). Agricultural commercialisation policy debate in Zimbabwe is enmeshed in the viability discourse where knowledge, power and multiple-actor interests are vested.

This paper explores the political economy of commercialisation in this post-land reform setting, asking which actor–network interests are aligned with which models of commercialisation, and how this is playing out within state policy as well as in the countryside. Nonetheless, the paper explores these from the colonial era to the present, concentrating on the policy incentives, power and policy process dynamics in the period leading up to and after the land reform era. Understanding the policy process from a political discourse perspective positions policy analysis at a vantage point to reveal how the relations of power influence the multiple-actor networks engaged in discursive policy negotiation, contest and outcomes.

2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF DEBATES ABOUT AGRICULTURAL COMMERCIALISATION

What were the salient political conditions under which commercialisation initiatives were pursued under the various phases of land reform? Zimbabwe has experienced over a century and a decade of efforts towards agricultural commercialisation. However, these were accompanied by intermittent contestations and complementarity over its efficacy and viability by varied actors (including the government, white commercial farmers, African peasants and donor organisations) over pragmatic, ideological and financial interests, among others. A periodised examination of the changing roles of state, capital (including white farmers) and rural peasants engaged in antagonistic and/or often complementarity over the policy process reveals changing actor–network interests in agricultural commercialisation from colonial to post-2000 Zimbabwe. Over this period, power brokers and centres changed as political power shifted across government, political parties and civil society and international players.

2.1 The colonial influence on commercialisation

The colonial legacy of land alienation and displacement of Africans to 'reserves' and replacement with European settlers in areas endowed with fertile lands in better agro-ecological regions under the 1898 Order in Council and the Native Reserves Commission report of 1914/15 shaped production and commercialisation processes in pre-independent Zimbabwe. As Selby (2006) and Hodder-Williams (1983) observed, commercial agriculture controlled state policy in Rhodesia, as every Prime Minister after Coghlan was a farmer and most Members of Parliament (MPs) were graduates of farming politics. Consequently, this colonial setting generated social differentiation (Alexander 1994), which reflected white superiority and a pro-minority white policy framework that dominated the time (Thomas 2003). Inevitably, over time, particularly in the post Second World War boom, this created a white commercial agriculture constituted of about 6,000 white settler farmers (Palmer 1977).

Moreover, the Rhodesian agricultural policy ensured that Europeans had better funding and markets for food and cash crops while Africans were undermined through the imposition of rates, taxes and unfair commodity prices (Phimister 1977; Ranger 1978; Palmer 1977). The white farmers accessed government support through the British South Africa Company (BSAC), beginning with the setting up and capitalisation of the Land Bank to the tune of £250,000 in 1912 (Rubert 1998; National Archives of Zimbabwe, 3 September 1926, cited in Palmer 1977). As Chimedza (1994) highlights, various programmes by the Land Bank and the Agricultural Finance Corporation rendered various credit schemes open to commercial farmers, which enabled the deepening of commercialisation of European farming in colonial Zimbabwe. As Stoneman (1981) observed, available credit was directed towards the 6,000 white commercial farmers who had accessed $R150m compared to $R1m received by 685,000 black farmers by the end of the Second World War. Consequently, white commercial farmers increased their share of marketed crops from 30 percent in 1960 to 75 percent in 1978, while real earnings for black farmers dropped by 40 percent from 1948 to 1970. Rukuni et al. (2006) also observed that state support in the construction of dams for irrigation and rural electrification aided white commercial farming progress.

The Rhodesian agricultural transformation agenda from the 1960s favoured large-scale estates, largely owned by South African and British agribusiness corporations as new estate investments by white commercial farmers. These estate farms were assisted with irrigation facilities, dams, electricity, roads (among other infrastructure) built by the state, and from the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) period, as part of import substitution efforts. The Rhodesian government also created state-owned agricultural enterprises such as the Tribal Trust Land Development Corporation (TILCOR), now Agricultural and Rural Development Authority (ARDA), which produced agricultural commodities on a commercial basis in the 1970s. This had the effect of expanding large-scale commercial farming, under direct government ownership.

Efforts aimed at improving African systems of agriculture were initiated through the special designated areas for 'emergent' black farmers, which were first established in the 1930s (Munslow, 1985, cited in Thomas 2003:

693). In these areas, successful master farmers bought land under the Native Purchase Area scheme, with a view to develop a small-scale commercial farmers (black yeoman) class (Moyo 1986). These 'progressive farmers' who emerged out of the Morris Carter Commission and the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 were intended to provide a buffer between the poor semi-proletarians engaged in peasant agriculture and the white settler farmers (Cousins and Scoones 2010; Ranger 1985; Shutt 1995; Cheater 1984). They were in less favourable agro-ecological regions of the country.

Further initiatives for African advancement and commercialisation occurred through the 1951 Native Land Husbandry Act. The Act proposed the creation of small-scale commercial farms (SSCF) contiguous to the large-scale commercial farms (LSCF), under freehold tenure. These farms were between 20ha and 200ha in size depending on their location in Zimbabwe's agro-ecological regions. This initiative sought to develop commercial agriculture among Africans while co-opting them politically and creating a buffer with the rest of the black African population situated in the drier areas. However, the programme faced criticism and was widely resisted due to the enforcement of technical regimes, such as soil conservation, settlement 'lines' and destocking, often exacerbating problems they were ostensibly intended to solve (Alexander 1993: 11).

The colonial period was therefore associated with state support towards commercialisation of agriculture, initially combined with undermining of the African peasantry but in the later part with efforts to co-opt these in the agriculture commercialisation agenda. State support to white farmers was certainly not conjectural, nor did it simply coincide with the world war period or the UDI period. This was a well-thought-out, long-term economic strategy initiated by the BSAC after the visit to Zimbabwe by its directors in 1908. The director decided to diversify into agriculture after realising that a second rand was a pipe dream. The BSAC therefore introduced an agricultural policy that favoured the minority white farmers. The independent government gained in 1923 perpetuated continuation of the policy as farmers constituted the ruling class. To this extent, the pre-colonial period was characterised by a capital–state nexus where large-scale agricultural commercial and political interests were deliberately and meticulously foregrounded.

2.2 Post-independence land reform and commercialisation

This tendency to favour the minority white farmers was partially reversed at independence in 1980 when the new government introduced support for smallholder production, even though only limited commercialisation took place (Shumba and Whingwiri 2006). Since then, various phases of land reform and economic policy changes have had differentiated impacts on agricultural commercialisation. Under each phase, competing state, capital and African peasantry interests were a source of contestation in policymaking, as the following section reveals.

In the early independence years, President Robert Mugabe maintained control over state power and used the squashing of Matebeleland internal insurgency to assert and demonstrate such power. However, land reform was restricted by the 'willing-seller, willing-buyer' clause incorporated into the Lancaster House-negotiated Constitution in 1979. Geo-political and power dynamics (Moyo 2000) and the 'reconciliation' policy adopted at independence combined to avert land reform, thereby limiting the scope for challenging the dualistic system of the colonial era. Arguments against large-scale land redistribution centred on the fear of disrupting agricultural productivity, as smallholder farmers were deemed less productive. The white Commercial Farmers' Union (CFU), civil servants, and foreign donors (United Kingdom and the World Bank) mounted pressure for the retention of the voluntaristic principle (Alexander 1994), highlighting economic risks of a major transformation (Kinsey 1999).

Furthermore, in the post-independence period, neo-liberal economic policies aided the delay in the resolution of the agrarian question (Moyo 2013), as government pursued welfarist policies, promoting limited resettlement and helping smallholder farmers to subsist and avoid poverty instead. The implications for agricultural commercialisation of deferring land reform were consequential, as banks continued to favour the large-scale sector with credit facilities despite government efforts to include smallholder farmers from 1980. Moreover, compromises with international and domestic capital resulted in the retention of large capitalist farms and estates, many involved in highly profitable cash and export-oriented production, thereby advancing agricultural commercialisation in the settled rural part of Zimbabwe.

The continued existence of an agrarian structure that favoured white commercial farming until 1999 illustrates the extent to which the interests of capital shaped state policy. For instance, during the 1990s, visions of agriculture were moulded by international institutions such as the World Bank, which emphasised modernised, business-oriented 'new' agriculture (World Bank 2007). These actors advocated for large-scale commercial farming on the basis that these were more viable compared to small-scale producers, forgetting that a huge range of commercial agriculture experienced varying degrees of success despite decades of substantial state support. Notably, the government succumbed to pressure from the indigenous masses and implemented land reform programmes from as early as the 1980s. Yet, the focus on production, rather than redistributive justice, resulted in state policy focusing on systems of production and farm productivity. The policy was underpinned by regulations that clearly stipulated that efficient commercial farming was a central objective and any variance attracted heavy penalties among the beneficiaries of the first post-independence land reform programme (Kinsey 1999; Bruce and Fortmann 1992). To this end, early settlement beneficiaries engaged in commercial farming with state support on production and marketing of commodities and somewhat welfarist goals.

As Cousins and Scoones (2010) observed, the land reform goals in post-independence Zimbabwe combined welfarist goals up to 1983, as well as productivity and contributions to economic growth on the back of improved farm planning and implementation of technical models of production. Consequently, the government introduced four models (Model A: planned villages; Model B: socialist cooperatives; Model C: out-growers linked to state farms; and Model D: village range) to achieve these objectives. Model A was intended to advance the de-congestion and welfarist objectives, while models B, C and D were designed to achieve agricultural commercialisation. However, Model A was more common and inevitably, beneficiaries of the first land reform programme carried out between 1980 and 1989 could not transform into fully fledged commercial agriculture, notwithstanding state support in the provision of agricultural inputs and infrastructure (including roads and dams).

In part, agricultural commercialisation was constrained by the fact that those owning large-scale commercial farms sold poor-quality land unsuitable for viable agricultural production and development under the Lancaster House agreement (Alexander 1994). One major constraint to agricultural commercialisation for old resettlement area (ORA) farmers was the limited financing options occasioned by the fact that farmers were formally prohibited from securing employment outside the farm, thereby restricting opportunities for remittances-based agricultural investments on the farms. Changes were experienced in the late 1980s as resource-endowed, skilled farmers were targeted for settlement as opposed to earlier efforts that targeted poor households, which limited overall scope for remittances and moderated the scope for agricultural commercialisation.

According to Moyo and Chambati (2013), Zimbabwe's land reform was, until the 1990s, market-based and state-managed, targeting the landless, overcrowded, land shortages among the rural and urban poor and unemployed populations. In the context of the neo-liberal Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) of the 1990s, the large-scale, mostly white-owned commercial sector was performing well – in large part due to government support, donor-supported export deals (particularly to the European Union), private sector investment initiatives and emerging high-value markets in various sectors such as horticulture, floriculture, wildlife and eco-tourism (Moyo 2000).

At the same time, there were efforts to indigenise the sector by opening up land markets to black commercial farmers. Partly, for the farmers, experience began to set in for the resettled farmers, heralding progress in agricultural commercialisation across the settlement models. However, throughout this period, the earlier status quo of a dualistic system inherited from the settler economy persisted, supported by diverse interests from the technocratic arms of the state, new black elites, white capital and commercial farmers, donors and external investors. This coalition was partly held together by commercialisation interests amid resistance from some sections of the bureaucracy and the landless masses.

The latter included rural peasants settled in dry, congested and unproductive regions of the country. In the main, war veterans who felt short-changed by the new government started pushing for land reform, working together with rural peasants and traditional leaders. It was their view that because land was central to the liberation struggle, their failure to gain access to it signified non-closure of the matter (Sadomba 2008). By 1999, the war veterans had mobilised sufficiently to cause political damage to the ruling party. As a result, as Sadomba (2008) posits, the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) was forced to co-opt them and adopt radical land reform as its own agenda. On their own, poor smallholder farmers had little purchase on the political system, and despite their demands for land, their voices were not heard. Ritual calls at election times for land reform were quickly forgotten once the ruling party had won. Moreover, some politicians lobbied for the deracialisation of land ownership even though some middle-class blacks and political elites bought commercial agricultural land in the open market (Moyo 1995). The growing influence of black petty-bourgeoisie on policy design began to be reflected from the 1990s as government began to focus on both small-scale family farms (A1) and middle-sized capitalist farms (called A2) schemes (Shivji et al. 1998).

As such, by the late 1990s, the mood had changed. Economic challenges combined with political ones – particularly following the formation of the labour-backed Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in September 1999 – forced the government to hurriedly put together a land policy proposing a major land reform effort where over 8m ha would be redistributed under an A1 villagised scheme and an A2 commercialised scheme. This was negotiated with key stakeholders, including the CFU and donors, but not much progress was made. The 1998 Land Reform and Resettlement Programme Phase II (LRRP II) proposed an A1 village model and a self-contained medium-scale commercial farming A2 model. The A1 model focused on 'food security' while the A2 model adopted the 'commercial systems, where a business model of viability was assumed' similar to the African Purchase Areas and small-scale farming models of the 1950s (Cousins and Scoones 2010: 5). This policy highlighted competing interests within government, as some public officers and bureaucrats clearly came out in support of agricultural commercialisation and aligned with capital, amid pressure from landless rural farmers and war veterans. Moreover, it was not until the land invasions of 1999-2000, and the subsequent acceptance of land reform allocations under the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP), that any change began to come about. Before this, agricultural commercialisation remained a preserve of the LSCFs and SSCFs, with targeted and selective government support, mainly driven by fractured state bureaucracy.

Various versions of market-based reforms were pursued during the 1980s and 1990s (Dawson and Kelsall 2012) to gradually reverse land inequalities and racially biased ownership patterns, based on technocratic planned resettlement (Deininger, Hoogeveen and Kinsey 2004; Dekker and Kinsey 2011). The government intended to retain commercial farming and to allow gradual development of the smallholder sector in both the communal and the resettled areas (Cousins and Scoones 2010). The SSCFs were seen as a scaled-down version of the LSCFs, which have the advantage of attracting lower transaction costs – a narrative that remains resilient to date. Contestations about viability therefore ensured that, to a large extent, LSCFs maintained their foothold on agriculture despite state policy and advocacy by peasant organisations and social movements. Moreover, the introduction of ESAP in 1991 (Stoneman 1988) and its devastating effects on the economy attracted resistance from broad social movements, led by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and students and some black advocacy groups. This presented the first real challenge to President Mugabe's power. Therefore, a combination of these developments and the increased demand for land by war veterans in the late 1990s as well as the formation of the MDC in 1999 weakened President Mugabe. As a result, he allowed the violent land grabs to go ahead and used this as his electoral contestation in 2000, triggering a dramatic restructuring of land ownership and agricultural production patterns.

What, then, was the effect of land reform regarding democratic multi-party politics and agricultural commercialisation in Zimbabwe? The period from 2000 is discussed in detail in the next section; suffice to mention here that this conjectural moment was uniquely characterised by a reconfiguration of both politics and agrarian relations in the countryside, which wrought new implications for agricultural commercialisation. The land reform programme was therefore a product of politics as much as it shaped political outcomes after 2000. Whereas some scholars are of the view that land reform was a culmination of a build-up of pressure for land reform from below (Moyo 2000; Sadomba 2008; Alexander 2006; Moyo and Yeros 2007), as evidenced by illegal occupations from the early 1980s, others have suggested that it was only introduced by ZANU-PF in response to defeat in the February 2000 electoral referendum (Raftopolous 2003; Sachikonye 2003). This scholarship therefore concludes that had the constitutional movement not defeated the ruling party in February 2000, the land reform programme may have never come to fruition. Yet, since it was implemented, land reform has defined political outcomes in Zimbabwe.

3. A NEW AGRARIAN STRUCTURE FOLLOWING LAND REFORM: A NEW POLITICS?

In the post-2000 period, Zimbabwe's agrarian change has been associated with a huge debate about the driving forces behind change. Has this been driven by neo-patrimonialism and corruption among the elites or is this the result of class and structural transformations in the context of a neoliberal economy wrought by land reform? In many respects, these debates have been ideologically framed, and have been unproductively oppositional, when in practice, a mix of factors have played out, often varying from place to place (Scoones 2015). On the political front, whereas President Mugabe effectively dealt with internal threats to political power from the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and later on Edgar Tekere (his former secretary-general who opposed the proposed one-party state ideology) in the 1980s and 1990s respectively, threats from social movements and the newly formed MDC in the late 1990s did not only attract vicious responses, but the ruling party also succumbed to pressure, resulting in the implementation of the FTLRP in 2000. As such, some opposition politicians and some scholars (Marongwe 2008; Zamchiya 2012) maintain that the beneficiaries were carefully selected from among ZANU-PF supporters.

The FTLRP resulted in a dramatic reconfiguration, which brought about a wider diversity of farm sizes under the LSCFs, SSCFs, ORAs, communal areas (CAs) and newly resettled areas (A1 and A2). This brought in new settings for the ongoing debate about 'viability' and what forms of commercialisation were possible. Around 6,000 formerly white-owned, large-scale farm units were transferred, resulting in around 10m ha being allocated to both small-scale and medium-scale farmers. Initially, a total of 168,671 families benefited from 9.2m ha under the FTLRP; while more than 145,775 families were resettled under A1 plots (Table 1). Beneficiaries of A1 plots received an average of 6 ha, mainly under villagised in better agro-ecological settings and mainly benefiting villagers from communal areas, some farm workers and some retrenched urban workers.

Table 1: Estimated landholdings by farmer groups: 1980, 2000 and 2010

Farm categories	Farms/households (000s)						Area held (000 ha)						Average farm size (ha)		
	1980		2000		2010		1980*		2000*		2010*		1980	2000	2010
	No	%	No	%	No	%	Ha	%	h	%	Ha	%			
Family farms	700	98	1.125	99	1,321	98	16,400	49	20,067	61	25,826	79	23	18	20
Small/middle commercial farms	8.5	1	8.5	1	30.9	2	1,400	4	1,400	4	4,440	13	165	165	142
Large farms	5.4	1	4.956	0.4	1.371	0.1	13,000	39	8,691.6	27	1,156.9	4	2,407	1,754	844
Agro-estates	0.296	0.1	0.296	0.02	0.247	0.02	2,567	8	2,567	8	1,494.6	5	8,672	8,672	6,051
Total	**714**	**100**	**1,139**	**100**	**1,135**	**100**	**33,367**	**100**	**32,726**	**100**	**32,878**	**100**	**46.7**	**28.7**	**24.3**

Source: Moyo (2011a). *1: Combines communal, ORAs and A1 areas.
*2: Combines A2 and SSCF areas.

The FTLRP also benefited 22,400 families under the A2 commercial farms with plots averaging about 142 ha. The A2 farms were mostly given to government bureaucrats, ruling party elites, and business people in industry and commerce, also security sector personnel (among others). The A2 farms (from 20 ha to 200 ha in size) were allocated to those deemed to have the financial muscle to operate on a commercial basis, with farm and business plans notionally required, affirming 'viability' on paper, although the A2 allocations in practice were subject to substantial manipulation through patronage relationships. Most of those retained in their original sizes were private and public estates, including those focused on sugar in the Lowveld, as well as conservancies linked to eco-tourism and (in some cases) dairy farming. Also left intact were those under black indigenous ownership and some under the Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BIPPA). The government avoided redistributing land associated with these enterprises, partly to avoid capital flight. Today, smallholder farms are the largest sector, with 1,321m households, 75,000 of which were resettled under the old resettlement programme from 1980. Additionally, 237 agro-estates (composed of corporates, parastatals, conservancies and institutions), 956 black LSCFs and 198 white LSCFs remained by 2010 (Moyo 2013). According to Moyo (2013), 13 percent of Zimbabwe's agricultural land is now under middle-scale farms (A2 and SSCFs) while 82 percent is under small farm producers (CA, A1 and informal settlements).

3.1 Agricultural production and commercialisation in post-colonial Zimbabwe

This new agrarian structure has spawned new dynamics across settlement sectors in response to differentiated resource endowment patterns and agro-ecological settings, with impacts on agricultural commercialisation in rural Zimbabwe, partly in conformity with government FTLRP policy intentions. In the period from 2000, the small-scale A1 farms have been involved in commercial production of tobacco, under contract farming arrangements, and have ventured into small-scale livestock, horticulture and other commercial activities, especially in the high-potential areas (Scoones et al. 2010; Moyo et al. 2009; Shonhe 2018). The medium-scale A2 farms, however, have fared less well, with major restrictions on private credit and loan finance and diminishing government capacity to support production across sectors, meaning that many such farms are not productive, unless private external finance has been sourced. While production declined following the implementation of land reform and following capital flight in light of the targeted sanctions imposed on the country, the trend has begun to reverse, as Table 2 shows. For instance, a decline in maize from 1,619,651 tonnes in 2000 to 471,152 tonnes in 2008 rose to an all-time high of 2,155,526 tonnes in 2017. Cotton also declined from 241,964 tonnes in 2000 to 0.4 tonnes in 2008, rising to 124,842 tonnes in 2017. Tobacco declined from 190,242 tonnes in 2000 to 69,791 tonnes in 2008 but rose to 206,947 tonnes in 2017.

Table 2: Agricultural commodity production, 1980–2017

Issues	Maize	Wheat	Groundnuts	Cotton	Tobacco	Soya beans	Sunflower
Year	Prod.(t)	Prod.(t)	Prod.(t)	Prod.(t)	Prod.(t)	Prod.(t)	Prod.(t)
1980	1,510,700	155,000	77,675	157,533	122,571	97,403	10,792
1981	2,833,400	183,500	118,797	170,594	67,356	72,881	12,676
1982	1,808,400	191,900	111,377	134,886	89,387	91,596	8,952
1983	909,800	124,200	31,652	146,521	94,296	80,626	3,373
1984	1,348,500	99,000	24,914	221,746	119,636	89,733	8,770
1985	2,711,000	207,200	67,938	274,186	105,555	87,217	18,106
1986	2,412,000	248,300	60,710	251,162	114,304	73,560	18,360
1987	1,093,700	215,000	79,060	280,016	127,996	94,795	26,026
1988	2,253,100	260,000	135,270	338,953	119,912	120,410	64,713
1989	1,931,200	285,000	100,875	270,225	129,960	126,115	60,814
1990	1,993,800	325,000	118,815	205,241	133,866	110,313	63,990
1991	1,585,800	300,000	107,040	261,051	170,149	97,295	63,963
1992	361,000	70,000	34,032	76,232	201,161	51,125	19,503
1993	2,063,003	250,000	55,550	214,300	218,370	70,520	67,650

1994	2,109,283	221,811	91,050	194,269	177,039	110,758	39,775
1995	884,962	238,578	45,675	98,411	178,652	96,555	17,421
1996	2,065,347	205,000	67,562	233,979	177,884	96,948	28,180
1997	1,552,703	250,000	123,633	195,212	171,191	97,063	18,863
1998	1,195,929	242,121	46,148	179,347	197,222	116,329	14,227
1999	1,606,588	260,909	80,240	197,259	175,282	120,685	12,308
2000	1,619,651	229,775	124,117	241,964	190,242	135,417	9,224
2001	1,526,328	197,526	168,749	280,254	159,853	140,793	30,393
2002	604,758	19,500	56,378	194,189	113,635	84,441	4,631
2003	1,058,786	122,427	86,494	159,497	93,514	41,197	16,923
2004	1,686,151	247,048	64,157	364,266	78,312	85,827	20,239
2005	915,366	229,089	57,754	196,300	83,230	56,730	7,419
2006	1,484,839	241,924	83,170	207,912	44,451	70,273	16,742
2007	952,600	144,870	125,000	235,000	79,000	112,300	25,700
2008	471,152	34,829	131,536	0.4	69,791	48,320	5,461
2009	1,242,566	47,910	216,619	246,757	63,429	115,817	39,018
2010	1,327,572	40,693	186,214	172,129	85,158	70,256	13,960
2011	1,451,461	53,073	230,475	220,219	177,795	84,174	11,508
2012	968,041	33,655	120,001	254,888	133,607	70,542	7,122
2013	798,596	39,242	86,747	133,011	172,815	76,933	
2014	1,456,153	58,738	135,138	114,724	216,000	84,661	-
2015	742,226	62,261	91,397	67,649	199,086	57,273	-
2016	511,816	61,715	73,709	36,598	171,707	47,922	-
2017	2,155,526	158,284	139,503	124,842	206,967	35,743	-

Source: Compiled from Ministry of Agriculture, Agricultural Extension Department and Shonhe (2018).

This trend shows a shift in agricultural commercialisation in post-2000 across settlement sectors, tied to command agriculture, independent contract farming and the emergence of joint ventures. Moreover, persistent and mounting pressure on government over productivity and the need for security has resulted in some policy changes in more recent years. For instance, joint ventures between former white commercial farmers and, in some cases, Chinese and Russian companies are working with resettled A2 beneficiaries in ways that have begun to re-energise commercial agriculture in the productive regions of Zimbabwe. The emergence of joint ventures has been motivated by the need to secure capital finance, the need to incorporate former commercial farmers, Chinese and Russian skill sets and new technologies and the overwhelming quest for commercialisation. For example, there are a minimum of nine joint ventures in Mvurwi farming area, five of which are under the Chinese and two involving former commercial farmers. The rest are under white farmers and black farmers who started farming more recently. One estate under BIPPA is run under six sections and by former white commercial farmers as farm managers (personal observation, author). BIPPA promotes tenure of security, which in turn facilitates access to credit, impacting positively on agricultural commercialisation. There is one LSCF under the black indigenous business person in this area.

The joint ventures are involved in the production of maize for the domestic market and tobacco, peas and citrus for the export market, mainly in China and South Africa (tobacco), the United Kingdom and Europe (peas) and the Middle East (citrus). To revitalise state land, the government has also focused on parastatals and 'has encouraged ARDA to go into public-private partnerships with private companies in an attempt to revive their fortunes, seeking new finance and investment from the private sector' (Scoones 2016). As a result, by 2014, at least 12 estates had entered into joint ventures involving local and international capital, namely: Chisumbanje, Middle Sabi, Katiyo, Mkwasine, Sisi, Nandi, Faire Acres, Jotsholo, Antelope, Ngwezi, Sedgewik and Doreen's Pride (Scoones 2016). The joint ventures have introduced new technologies in agriculture, brought new varieties of crops, helped in securing capital finance and positively impacted on productivity and capital accumulation, and therefore advanced agricultural commercialisation.

Overall, the new land-holding structure in Zimbabwe presented both challenges and opportunities for commercialisation. To a large extent, the government's land policy was shaped by a radicalised land reform mixed with a normalisation agenda that sought alliance with international capital (Moyo and Chambati 2013; Moyo and Yeros 2007). This two-pronged approach ensured that the transformed agrarian relations would allow for agricultural commercialisation as international capital began to intersect with interests and actors over time. Having assessed these dynamics, the following sections examine the political economy of state support, as well as the politics of land and subsidies, in order to examine how political and commercial interests are aligned in relation to large-, medium- and small-scale agriculture, representing the new 'trimodal' agrarian structure of contemporary Zimbabwe (Moyo 2011b). The next two sections of the paper explore the economic basis for political incentives, and how this has affected the pathways of commercial agriculture over time, beginning with a discussion of government support and the subsidy regime.

4. GOVERNMENT SUPPORT AND THE POLITICS OF SUBSIDY REGIMES

This section explores the scale and effect of government subsidies in Zimbabwe. Who benefits from what type of subsidies, and with what effects on agricultural commercialisation? The Input Support Programmes (ISPs) implemented in the past 20 years have incorporated the intensification of use of green revolution inputs (certified seed, fertilisers and chemicals) (Jayne et al. 2013). However, the programmes have generally been viewed negatively, ostensibly due to the fact that in many cases their high costs exceeded the value of the outputs, leading to losses (Moyo et al. 2014). Moreover, 'mismanagement, elite capture and ineffectiveness in targeting of the poor purportedly led to the failure of ISPs' (ibid.: 2). Nonetheless, as Table 3 shows, despite the changing policy regimes, the state has introduced subsidy programmes from the pre-independence period to the present day. Overall, the objective has been to achieve agricultural commercialisation and food security, and as such the ISPs often targeted farmers from across the settlement sectors.

Table 3 also shows that the state has sought to support both the smallholder and commercial sectors (LSCFs and SSCFs) in the post-2000 period. This was done through the provision of fuel, the mechanisation programme, livestock schemes, credit facilities, access to foreign currency, water and electricity support, price offers and crop inputs. The objective was to improve farm productivity, commercialisation and capital accumulation trajectories. A survey by the African Institute for Agrarian Studies (AIAS) (2013–14) in six districts (Goromonzi, Zvimba, Chiredzi, Chipinge, Kwekwe and Mangwe) showed that 25.3 percent of farmers were supported by the government while 1.1 percent secured inputs through contract farming. Across settlement types, 43.2 percent of CA families, compared to 27.5 percent of the A1 families and 1.5 percent of the A2 farmers, benefited from subsidy programmes. A survey by Shonhe (2018) carried out in Hwedza district (2013–15) shows that 11.1 percent of farmers received government assistance in the form of farming inputs. The extensive array of subsidies re-

Table 3: Zimbabwe agricultural subsidy policy regime

Policy regimes	Period	Types of subsidies		
		Indirect	Direct	Distribution
1. Controlled regime	1965–79	Extensive	Extensive	LSCFs
2. Heterodox policy • Controlled capital accounts • Interest rates regulation • Mixed control of agricultural markets	1980–90	• Cheap foreign currency • Subsidised credit • Input price repression	• Food relief • Electricity • Crop packs • Extension	• LSCFs • Industry • Small farmers
3. Liberalised environment	1990–2000	• Grain market support	Crop inputs	Small farmers
4. Post-land reform • Structural change • Controlled agricultural markets	2000–08	• Forex • Credit • Water • Electricity	• ISPs • Mechanisation • Fuel	• • All farms • • Industry • • A1/A2
5. Re-liberalisation • Dollarisation; trade; liberalisation	2009–14	• Concessional credit • Price offers	• Crop inputs • Livestock	• Small farmers

Source: Moyo, Chambati and Siziba (2014).

introduced from 2002 to 2008 followed a devastating drought in the 2001–2 farming season.

A reversal of the liberalisation of the economy introduced under the ESAP in 1991 also coincided with the introduction of a highly controlled economy under crisis where the state provided a range of subsidies – farm inputs (seeds and fertiliser, water and electricity, output price support to farmers), as Table 4 illustrates.

Table 4: Overview of the Government of Zimbabwe Input Support Programmes (ISPs), 2002–2014

Features	Targeted ISPs		Universal ISP
Period	2002/03 – 2007/08	2009/10 – 2012/13	2013/14
Maize			
Average no. of beneficiaries			
Average value (US$)			
Targeted area (ha)			640,000
Average area (ha)		426,000	646,880
Targeted farmers	A1, A2, LSCF, Communal, Old resettlement	A1, Communal, Old resettlement	A1, Communal, Old resettlement
% subsidy	100	100	100
Inputs	Seed, fertiliser	Seed, fertiliser	Seed, fertiliser, lime
Distribution mechanisms	Physical distribution – GMB, ARDA, Agritex	Physical distribution – GMB, Agritex	Physical distribution – GMB, Agritex
Participation of agro-dealers	No	No	No
Small grains			
Average no. of beneficiaries		118,667	21,490
Average value (US$)			
Targeted area (ha)			
Average area (ha)		59,333	10,745
Targeted farmers	A1, A2, LSCF, Communal, Old resettlement	A1, Communal, Old resettlement	A1, Communal, Old resettlement
% subsidy	100	100	100
Inputs	Seed, fertiliser	Seed, fertiliser	Seed, fertiliser, lime
Distribution mechanisms	Physical distribution – GMB, ARDA, Agritex	Physical distribution – GMB, Agritex	Physical distribution – GMB, Agritex
Participation of agro-dealers	No	No	No
Total average value for all ISPs (US$)		58,366,667	161,000,000

Source: Moyo et al. (2014) Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe Annual Reports. US$ equivalent quoted at the official exchange rate. These amounts would have been much lower at prevailing parallel exchange rates.

In the post-2000 period, a number of public finance and subsidised programmes were also introduced (see Table 5). These included: the crop input credit schemes run under the Grain Marketing Board (GMB), the Irrigation Rehabilitation and Development Programme (IRDP), Operation Maguta/Inala (food security) Champion Farmers Programme, the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe's (RBZ) Farm Mechanisation Programme, the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP), the Productive Sector Facility (PSF), and the Agricultural Support Productive Enhancement Facility (ASPEF) – which all amounted to US$114.2m in 2008 (Murisa and Chikweche 2015). These government and RBZ-run programmes had the key objective of improving agricultural productivity to support industrial capacity utilisation in the face of an economy in crisis. As such, most programmes were targeted to the A2 sector and state-run institutions such as ARDA, which were regarded as having greater scope for commercialised agriculture.

Table 5: Coverage of RBZ agricultural financing schemes

Scheme/years	Objectives of the scheme	Support provided	Targeted beneficiaries	Comments on beneficiaries and policy
Free government inputs	Support smallholder production	Seed and fertiliser	Communal/A1 farmers	Selection aimed at squashing political pressure
Productive Sector Finance facility 2004	Provided agricultural credit after private lending declined	Subsidied credit at 25% interest rate vs. 300% from private banks	A2 farmers	Sought to promote agricultural commercialisation
ASPEF 2005	Enhance food export production	Cheap credit	A2 farmers, agro-industry, merchants, state farms	Policy intended to enhance agricultural commercialisation
Operation Maguta 2005	Boost food security through command agriculture	Inputs and ploughing support for maize and wheat	A2 farmers and A1 and CA in 2005/06	Dual purpose of food security and commercialisation
Champion farmer 2005	Boost agricultural production through capable farmers	Inputs subsidies	A2 farmers	Achieve agricultural commercialisation
Farm mechanisation 2003-08	Address labour shortages and increase cropped area	Machinery and equipment for free and cheap credit	2, A1, and state farms Seed producing firms	Promoting agricultural commercialisation
Seed supply recovery 2002–08	Increase cropped area and number of producers	Cheap credit, subsidised forex, output contracts	Seed producing firms, contracting A2 farmers	Promotion of agricultural commercialisation among A2 farmers
Irrigation Rehabilitation and Development 2004–06	Resuscitate and expand irrigation	Cheap credit for equipment and subsidised water and electricity	A2 and state farms	Mostly benefited A2 farms and promoted commercialisation
ARDA money 2003–06	Increase ARDA cropped area	Cheap credit, seasonal land leases	ARDA farms and agribusiness	Aimed at commercialisation of state farms

Source: Adapted from Moyo et al. (2009); World Bank (2006); Scoones et al. (2010); Murisa and Chikweche (2015).

Inputs were distributed to farmers across the settlement models, through state institutions and services, notably the army and police. Despite the reliance on state security agents, food security and agricultural commercialisation were the central objectives for the various programmes. Three policy intentions can be detected: one focused on welfare and food security, with seed and fertiliser distributed to poorer smallholder households; another focused on boosting the potential for commercial production; and a third which advanced electoral goals for the ruling party through patronage politics and party campaign programmes. State subsidies since 2000 have become focused on both communal areas and new resettlement areas. International donors have focused on providing support to CAs and ORAs not subject to jambanja (chaotic and violent) land reform, in line with the 'restrictive measures' applied by most Western governments. Remarkably, in a bid to correct this bias, state support to A2 farmers has also been wrapped up in patronage politics, with elite beneficiaries, often linked to the party-state and military, gaining substantially. The result has been a political balancing act with the state and its powerful elite allies, balancing demands from different quarters. Secondly, security forces deployed under Maguta/food security had multiple roles as shall be revealed in detail in sections to follow. Suffice to mention here that the input scheme and the involvement of military personnel in electoral issues have become very dominant in the post-2000 era.

The challenge of this political balancing act became more intense following the highly contested elections of 2008, when ZANU-PF nearly lost to the opposition and was forced into a Government of National Unity (GNU). The period from 2009–13 resulted in a decline in direct, visible patronage support to elite land-owners in the A2 areas, and support instead focused on food security and smallholder farming. Changes in actors in government – more specifically in the Ministry of Finance, where an MDC Minister, Tendai Biti, was in charge from 2009–13 – shifted some power centres and resulted in changes in policy priorities and interests. The party's social democratic orientation meant that more support was channelled towards smallholder farmers in the CA and A1 settlement scheme. In this period (2009–13), a total of 1,065,000 beneficiaries received farming inputs for maize production on 426,000 ha and 118,667 beneficiaries received support for small grains on 59,333 ha. Government support for maize production increased to 1,617,200 beneficiaries in the 2013/14 farming season as efforts went towards food security under a welfarist thrust rather than agricultural commercialisation.

However, following the collapse of the GNU and the re-establishment of the ZANU-PF hegemony, there have been growing calls for support of commercial agriculture from elite interests. For instance, in the 2016/17 season, the government introduced a Special Maize Production Programme (SMPP) under 'command agriculture', where 88,931 farmers were contracted and funded with US$160m to produce maize (Ministry of Finance and Economic Development 2016). The SMPP gave priority to farmers producing under irrigation and in the high productivity areas of the country. The government has also funded the production of cotton under the Vulnerable Households Input Scheme, targeting 400,000 communal farmers with US$42m (Ministry of Finance and Economic Development 2016). The cotton production scheme has scope for enhancing the cotton-to-clothing value chain linkages, and is set to improve demand for the commodity on the domestic market.

Theoretically, these interventionist programmes provide increased scope for variegated pathways for commercialisation for the small-scale, middle-scale and large-scale farmers in Zimbabwe. To the extent that the government mainly targeted A2 farms for increased productivity under command agriculture, the scope for agricultural commercialisation reveals interesting dimensions on how politicians and state bureaucrats remain inclined towards the LSCF and SSCF sectors. As pressure over calls for Mugabe to retire mounted, internal dynamics within the ruling party suggested that the succession battle had shifted internally post-2013, as shown in Table 6.

In this regard, there are suggestions that these newly introduced programmes are part of an extension of patronage politics along contesting factions within the ruling party. The champion of command agriculture, former Vice President Emmerson Mnangagwa, eventually took over the reins of state power and became President of Zimbabwe while its coordinator, former Vice Air Marshal Perence Shiri, is now the Minister of Agriculture. Command agriculture beneficiaries are mainly A2 farms and, as already stated, these are within the bureaucracy, the army and the senior ZANU-PF leadership positions. By targeting them for capacitation, the Mnangagwa faction within ZANU-PF sought to create a middle class capable of mobilising grassroots support for their political cause. The impact of patronage electoral democracy is therefore beyond doubt.

Table 6: Power and agricultural policy in Zimbabwe

Period	How was power maintained?	Economic, social and political dimensions	Role of agricultural policy
1980s	Consolidation of power within ZANU-PF under President Mugabe	Reconciliation policy by Mugabe. ZANU-PF popularity – post-independence 'honeymoon'. Education and health service provision extended. War on ZAPU 1985–87, Challenges within ZANU-PF on one-party state (e.g. Tekere) crushed. Economic high point reached c. 1986; fiscal challenges begin after this	Deal with commercial farmers (Jenkins 1997). Instead of land reform, services extended to communal areas, e.g. fertiliser, maize pricing, cotton service provision. Marketing infrastructures such as GMB and CMB extended to communal areas. Tractor rentals through ARDA. Partial success in commercialisation by the smallholder sector on the back of government support.
1990s	Power consolidated, but popularity eroding	1990 changes to constitution? Fiscal problems → SAP, contraction in service provision Severe droughts 1991–92, 1994–95. Devaluation 1998 – sign of economic strain. Resurgence of pressure from 'war veterans' for land reform and cash payments. Student and labour unrests. Constitutional revision struggles. Founding of MDC in 1999	Commercial farmers do well, but services to communal areas reduced by structural adjustment programme. Constitutional reform struggles and opposition pressure magnify land issue. Agricultural commercialisation mainly by commercial farmers.
2000s	Political power threat from the MDC. Unleashing of violence under the guise of land reform	Constitutional referendum defeat 2000 → FTLR Economic crisis – collapse of forex from both tobacco and aid. Capital flight. Company closures and job losses and food shortages. Popular redistribution, but also rents to security services/heads – maintain ultimate grip on violence, given momentum behind veterans' militias	FTLR inaugurated – response to collapse of previous deal (post-SAP, nothing to offer to communal areas); punish white farmers for referendum defeat and support of MDC. Repeated droughts in early 2000s. Closure of markets (inputs and outputs). Introduction of tobacco contract farming. Constraints on agricultural commercialisation across settlement farming sectors.
2008/09 –2013	Power-sharing agreement	Economy stabilised (dollarisation), but little development. Economic liberalisation and re-engagement with international community. Policy inconsistencies, contradiction and contestations within GNU. Business confidence collapse, and investment constrained towards end of GNU as ZANU-PF pushes redistributive policies	Consolidation of contract farming on the back of economic liberalisation. Recovery of input and output markets by the broad peasantry and local capital. Broadened commercialisation of agriculture across settlement models.

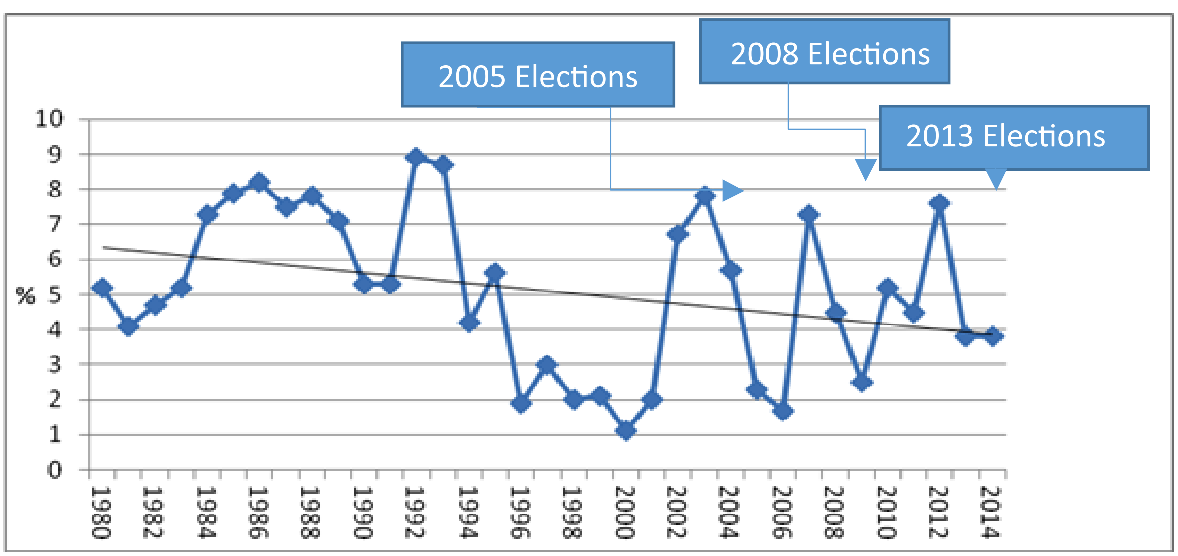
2012-17	Succession positioning within ZANU-PF	Collapse of central Mugabe power within ZANU-PF as factions jockey for position. Fragmentation of and proliferation of opposition formations. Donor fatigue.	Joint ventures and contract farming as well as self-financing drive commercialisation differentially across settlement areas. Emergence of command agriculture and expanded neo-liberal policies. Policy favouring medium-scale farms.
2018	Military coup and rise of Emmerson Mnangagwa	Fragmented opposition. Weak civil society and labour movement make ZANU-PF invincible. ZANU-PF succession politics resolved partially. Zimbabwe reopens for business. Neo-liberalism is consolidated.	Consolidation of command agriculture for food crops and joint ventures at the centre of agricultural commercialisation. Contract farming in cotton and sugar cane is strong. Markets reopen. Policy favouring A2 farms.

The connection between the government's agricultural input schemes and electoral outcomes clearly demonstrates state patronage intentions. As Figure 1 shows, the share of the national budget allocated to agriculture has declined since independence, with peaks coinciding with certain periods of the electioneering cycle.

The total budget has also been declining in real terms as the economy contracted, particularly in the period 2005–08, and again in the past two years, due to a combination of massive corruption, economic mismanagement and ongoing 'sanctions' by international donors and financial institutions. Whereas the contribution of agriculture to national gross domestic product (GDP) (about 19 percent) and export earnings (around 30 percent) places the sector at the heart of the Zimbabwean economy (Ministry of Finance and Economic Development 2016), the performance of the sector has changed dramatically since 2000, owing to disasters associated with droughts and increasingly declining state capacity to support the sector. For instance, with regard to exports, as Table 7 shows, agriculture export earnings of US$1,087m were projected for 2016, up from $979,6m in 2012. Over the same period, food imports decreased dramatically from US$730.6m to US$352.3m in 2014 and US$430.2m in 2016.

Agricultural policymaking remains contested as various stakeholders, including government ministries and departments, have interests that are at variance. For instance, whereas the RBZ and the Ministry of Finance seek to earn foreign currency through the production of export and cash crops under commercialised agriculture, the Ministry of Agriculture seeks to achieve food security and the Ministry of Lands aims for higher land utilisation in the productive regions of the country.

Figure 1: Share of agriculture in national budget, 1980–2014 (%)



Source: Shonhe 2018; compiled from Government of Zimbabwe budget estimates, various years.

The Ministry of Finance has therefore been at the forefront of advancing policy changes for the improvement of farm productivity and the development of markets as annual budget statements and RBZ policy statements show (Ministry of Finance and Economic Development 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016). Such efforts have also included the protection of farms under BIPPAs, as is the case with Forester Estates in the Mvurwi farming area and agro-estates linked to eco-tourism in many parts of the country. In the same vein, the sugar estates were left running on a commercial basis with a variation associated with the introduction of an out-growers scheme. Changes in land use associated with joint ventures have also attracted opposition from local people either dispossessed of their land (as was the case in Chisumbanje) or through reduced job opportunities due to mechanisation (as in many cases in the Mvurwi farming area). Largely, these policy initiatives have been central to agricultural commercialisation in post-2000 Zimbabwe and are aimed at improving foreign currency earnings and revenue earnings for the Treasury. In such instances, policy interests among farmers, international capital, state bureaucrats and senior ZANU-PF politicians tend to coincide and thus drive agricultural commercialisation.

There are considerable incentives for politicians to give agriculture high priority, but signals are mixed, as seen in the allocations of the national budget. While occasional subsidy schemes emerge, linked to elections and the extension of political patronage, these are not sustained attempts at improving the sector, and much wastage and corruption is evident. The next section examines the power, political networks and incentives that emerge around agriculture and attempts at commercialisation in contemporary Zimbabwe.

Table 7: Balance of payments (US$m)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
	Actual	Actual	Estimate	Projection	Projection
Current account balance	-3 042.40	-3 432.20	-2 837.2	-2 595.3	-2 579.6
Trade balance	-2 902	-3 114.60	-2748	-2 880.9	-2 547.8
Export F.O.B	3 808.20	3,694.20	3 558.20	3 430.2	3 673.4
Agriculture	979.6	1 047.50	981.2	964.1	1 087.0
Mining	2 189.10	2 055.80	1 977.00	1 898.9	1 997.4
Manufacturing	549.2	487.00	510.3	475.2	494.7
Imports F.O.B	6 710.20	6 808.90	6 306.30	6 311.0	6 221.2
Food	730.6	658.10	352.3	566.6	430.2
Fuel	1 365.70	1 364.70	1 393.60	1 217.5	1 203.1
Capital account balance	1 721.80	2 723.40	2 919.1	2 453.7	2 449.4
Errors and omissions	885.30	513.50	-122.20	0.00	0.00
Overall balance	-435.30	-392.40	-40.3	-141.6	-130.2

Source: ZIMSTAT for actuals; Ministry of Finance and Economic Development 2015 and RBZ for projections.

5. POWER, POLITICAL NETWORKS AND INCENTIVES

Having explored the economic basis for politically motivated state incentives, this section asks: what then is the nature and strength of links between commercial farming and/or trading interests, power and political parties, especially if there is a dominant party? Do top political leaders have private investments in agriculture and, if so, in which sectors? What is the importance and role of donors, farmers' organisations and formal business associations? What is the role of state policy and state institutions in the historicity of agricultural commercialisation? How have differentiated fractions gained access to capital, and in what ways is access gained? How are profits distributed, who are the winners and losers?

Post-independence efforts by ZANU-PF were centred on securing a one-party state. As already discussed, in line with these efforts, the party adopted redistributive transfers to the peasant sector with the intention of securing political hegemony in rural areas, which until March 2008 remained unchallenged (Dawson and Kelsall 2012). Over the years, despite efforts towards redistributive justice, the indigenous elite slowly grew through an interwoven 'bureaucratic-financial comprador' class, which also began to acquire farms under the 'willing-seller, willing-buyer' framework, and the growth with equity policy adopted in 1980.

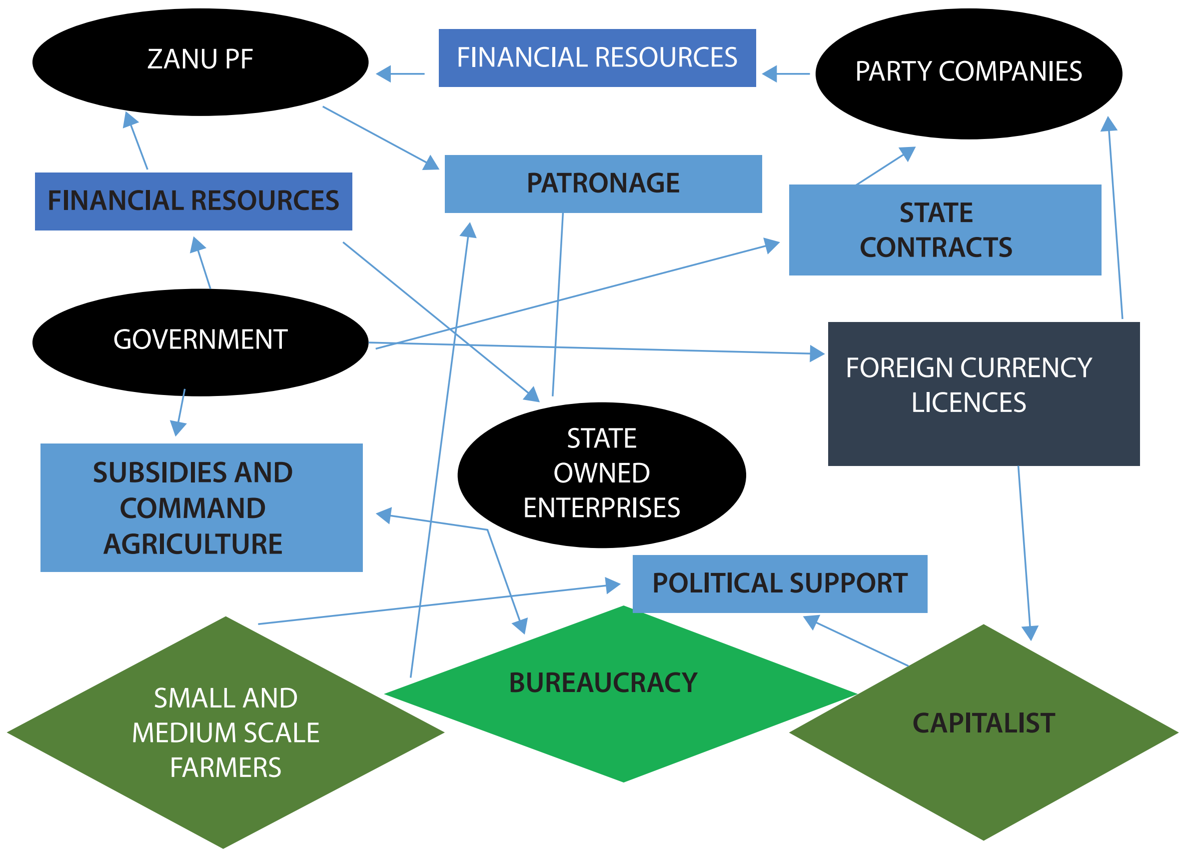
Black lobby groups such as the Indigenous Business Development Centre (IBDC), the Affirmative Action Group (AAG) and the Indigenous Business Women Organisation (IBWO) – in some cases funded by the government, in some cases tied to ZANU-PF – secured contracts from central and local governments and, as a result, some indigenous black Africans began to rise across the business sectors. At the same time, beginning from 1980, state institutions such as the GMB, the Cold Storage Commission (CSC), the Cotton Marketing Board (CMB), the Agricultural Finance Bank, the District Development Fund (DDF), and ARDA have been applied to distribute financial resources, inputs and farming equipment as part of building a patronage network, welfarist efforts, and as work towards agricultural commercialisation.

A complex web tied to economic and political interests developed over the years, as Figure 2 illustrates. The web included white business interests, where personalities also linked to the ruling ZANU-PF party, such as Billy Rautenbach and Nicholas van Hoogstraten, worked in alliance with ZANU-PF to advance mutually beneficial business interests, spanning more than two decades, as Dawson and Kelsall (2012) posit. For instance, Billy Rautenbach runs the Chisumbanje estate joint venture with ARDA and since 2009 has proceeded to build a sugar cane processing mill, also involved in ethanol fuel production and blending. The web of business people serves to advance the interests of the party as profits are used to finance party operations. At the same time, some ZANU-PF party-linked businessmen who were assisted through the various empowerment vehicles in turn fund party operations, aiding the role played by subsidies to the peasantry.

To fully capture the dynamics of the financial circuits elaborated in Figure 2, we will break down what constitutes 'financial resources', 'state contracts', 'capitalists' and the 'peasantry', revealing how flows of capital and rents have shifted over time. Financing agriculture has changed in a significant way since 1980 when the country gained independence. As Shonhe (2018) revealed in his study, only 1.3 percent of farmers accessed bank credit between 2013 and 2015, compared to 11.7 percent for contract farming. So how is agriculture financed today? Shonhe (2018) reveals that 52.6 percent of farmers are self-financed using proceeds from the previous season, while 26.3 percent rely on their personal savings and 23.1 percent are supported by diaspora remittances. However, such a financing model is incapable of delivering large-scale investment in equipment and farm infrastructural development. As such, some land beneficiaries have opted for joint venture arrangements where the capitalisation of the farm involves introducing new farming equipment and state-of-the-art infrastructure, including tractors, disc harrows, fertiliser planters, centre pivots and hi-tech driers, which have resulted in improved tobacco production (Scoones 2016).

These joint venture investments cover a wide range of areas, from production of beef, tobacco, soya beans, maize, wheat and cotton to tea and peas. Even though

Figure 2: Rent flows in Zimbabwe



Source: Shonhe 2018; compiled from Government of Zimbabwe budget estimates, various years.

they are generally seen to result in improved productivity through commercialisation and recovery of redundant lands under ARDA, they are, however, less integrated into the agricultural economy landscape. In some cases, overstated capital investments impact negatively on the viability of farming operations, while returns on investment for the new farm owners are much lower.[2]

Pertaining to contract farming, much has been said about this financing option. While 70 percent of tobacco production is currently financed though this option, most of the other crops remain self-financed. More recently, the government has re-introduced cotton contract farming through the Cotton Marketing Board (CMB), and maize and soya beans under command agriculture. Tobacco contract farming is financed by 23 merchants and mostly from foreign sources. However, some of the international and local merchants borrow from local banks for onward extension to farmers. The financing of command agriculture is complex and often secretive. The RBZ notes that more than US$2bn has been channelled to command agriculture through Treasury bills. However, Sakunda Energy has also invested in command agriculture. (Sakunda Energy is owned by Dutch commodities giant, Trafigura, via its South African subsidiary, Puma Energy Africa Holdings.) Through coordination with three banks (Commercial Bank of Zimbabwe, Ecobank and Barclays), a total of $487m had been raised, of which $334m funded command agriculture, up from $192m channelled towards the Presidential input scheme.

This means that command agriculture is a government-mediated contract farming arrangement in which international and domestic finance work in collaboration with local banks. State-mediated contract farming involves collaboration with international and domestic ‘capitalists’ in agricultural financing. Small-scale farmers (peasantry) secure their profits within these complex global chains, even though extraction of super profits is more dominant. These small-scale farmers are currently accumulating assets, as the Mvurwi case study (section 5.1) will show, resulting in social differentiation (Shonhe 2018). Yet, to secure compliance, contracting merchants have often co-opted ZANU-PF local leadership in farm contract farming committees and local security agents have been used to arrest and, in some cases, enforce the contract selling arrangements and collection of farmers’ assets in the event of default. Local party leaders who benefit through more favourable deals are therefore used through informal arrangements by international and domestic capital to enforce contract farming arrangements in the countryside of Zimbabwe.

Where independent tobacco and cotton contract farming has created a middle class of farmers who are divorced from politics or are able to take leadership positions in politics (Scoones 2018), the government-mediated command agriculture presents the opposite – a vice on patronage basis. It also presents an emerging complex network between agricultural financing and resources from the energy sector, connected to some elites in the ruling class. Unlike independent contract farming, command agriculture – being state-mediated – provides opportunities for extension of patronage, given that the Ministry of Agriculture coordinates the selection of beneficiaries, distribution of inputs and collection of farming outputs.

So, how important is it for the governing party to appeal to rural residents for support and/or legitimacy? How do they do this? How important is support to smallholder agriculture within this? The agricultural public–private partnership (PPPs), often tied to joint ventures, tend to benefit some elites in the ruling party who have entered into such arrangements. In much the same way, the agricultural support scheme was used to mobilise people in rural areas to vote for the ruling party (as already highlighted). The party was also accused of running a parallel government during the GNU period – an infrastructure which the opposition suggested was responsible for the opaque operations in diamond sales. Under a convoluted state–party system, as is the case with the ZANU-PF government, resources secured through such an opaque process can easily find their way into the party system and can therefore go a long way in supporting the ISP party agenda.

This has allowed ZANU-PF to rely on redistributive transfers as part of an electioneering strategy, particularly after the formation of the MDC in 1999. According to Dawson and Kelsall (2012), ZANU-PF began a militarisation programme whereby retired officers were appointed to top positions in key areas of the public sector (including agriculture), which gave the army economic and political control as well as opportunities for capital accumulation under the central coordination of the Joint Operations Command (JOC). By 2005, the JOC had been deployed under 'Maguta' to advance ZANU-PF interests through food, farming distribution and violence. The opposition parties have consistently accused ZANU-PF of electoral fraud since 2000, and identify patronage and violence as the key factors driving electoral outcomes across rural and urban constituencies. Soldiers deployed under 'Maguta' remain stationed in the designated rural areas working on the new programmes. Under these circumstances, the policy intention of agricultural commercialisation is often missed, as targeting is biased towards electoral voter dictates.

For Zamchiya (2012: 35–6):
The opposition became a real threat for Zanu PF in post-2000 after winning the referendum and 57 out of the 120 contested parliamentary seats. It was important for the clients to become more overt and for the patron to strengthen the loyalty of the security forces through giving them patronage which included pieces of land during Fast Track.'

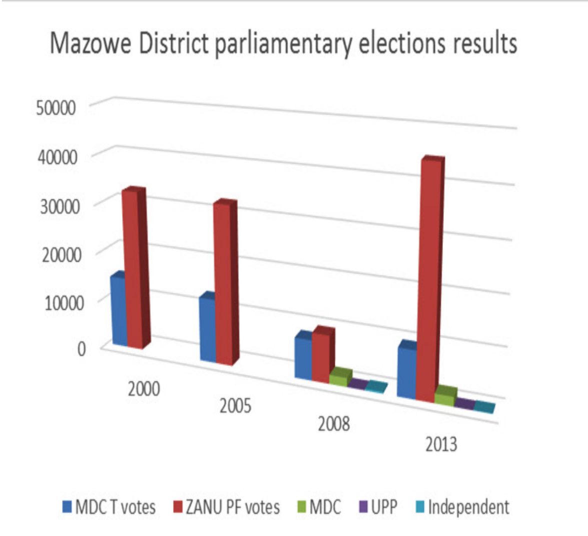
Zamchiya (2012) further observes that the state sought to maintain its hegemony by identifying and appeasing certain groups and, in particular, 'The state sought to appease its largely rural support base in return for political support', through the manipulation of the subsidy programmes. This led to the introduction of 'Maguta' programmes under the army and the Ministry of Agriculture in rural areas.

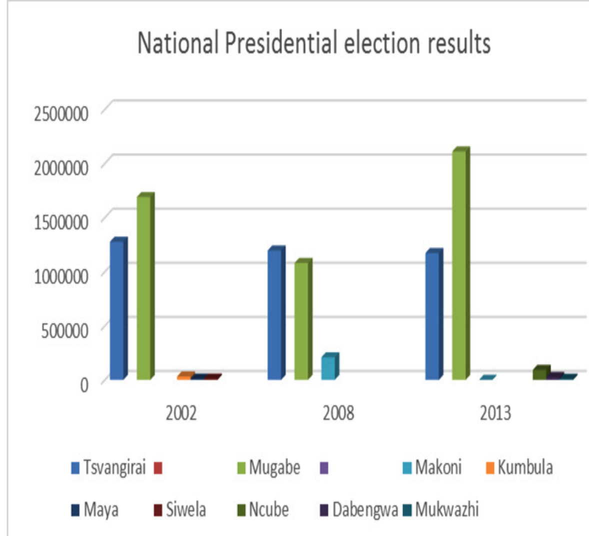
Using one of the areas where the FTLRP of 2000 resulted in a major restructuring of land ownership and where political dynamics have been highly influenced by state subsidies reveals how political parties' interests have impacts on commercialisation efforts. As Figure 3 shows, electoral support for ZANU-PF waned in Mazowe from 2000 to 2008; however, the trend was dramatically reversed in 2013.

Presidential elections show a similar trend, with President Mugabe's support breaking the 2m mark in 2013, up from slightly above 1m in 2008. The opposition MDC's support took a proportional decline in 2013, showing a shift from the opposition to the ruling party where, for instance, in the presidential elections of 2000, opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai won in 2008, leading to a negotiated settlement and GNU in 2009. The intensification of ISP (see also Table 3) under the guise of the Presidential input scheme and black empowerment lobby under the Indigenisation and Empowerment Act of 2010 reversed electoral outcomes, as the parliamentary and presidential elections results show.

While the study by Moyo et al. (2014: 4) extensively discussed 'targeting criteria and reach; inputs usage and productivity; market crowding out effects; cost-benefit ratios; prices and poverty relations and sustainability' of subsidies, their political implications were avoided. With regards to the impact of government subsidies on agrarian change, commercialisation and politics, Minot and Benson (2009) suggested that state interventions tend to distort market prices, which disrupts the development of private agro-dealership

Figure 3: Party performance 2000–2013





Source: Compiled from Zimbabwe Elections Commission and Elections Resource Centre, 2016.

markets. Subsidies tend to lower volumes of sales in farming inputs for agro-dealers. However, in the case of Zimbabwe, smart subsidies introduced by the government post-2009 tended to reduce the crowding out, yet their distribution remained subject to political manipulation. Similarly, as Jayne et al. (2013) noted, ISPs impact negatively on commercial distribution of inputs, yet if properly implemented, would increase production levels for the crops in question.

The provision of subsidies tends to be politicised for electoral purposes. In the case of Zimbabwe, the introduction of and increases in ISPs has tended to coincide with electoral periods, as Figure 1 showed. For instance, the 2012/13 ISP was coded 'the Presidential Well Wishers Special Agricultural Inputs Scheme', creating a notion that President Robert Mugabe (rather than the government) had, out of the abundance of his goodwill, initiated the programme. However, as it turned out, the scheme, which has become an annual programme, is funded by government through the President's office; as such, the name is deliberately intended to mislead voters.

In the context of a policy vacuum today – with the technocratic arm of the state often incapacitated through lack of resources – and a political context dominated by complex political manoeuvres and debates over 'succession', there is increased contestation. These divergent positions are held across the ruling party, and sometimes by the same people in different speeches at different times, and across arms of government, with different wings advocating different perspectives. It is a confused picture, and clear political incentives are hard to discern. Instead, a struggle between different visions of post-land reform Zimbabwe is ongoing, as reflected in multiple statements, subsidy programmes and policy initiatives. The next section sheds more light on these and other debates by focusing on two commodities grown in Mazowe district, Mvurwi farming areas. Mazowe district presents variegated settings that reveal pathways for commercialisation and state practise across differentiated settlement models within one agro-ecological farming region, as the following section reveals.

5.1 Mvurwi farming area commodity production and value chains

How have power, political interests and policy processes played out in one of Zimbabwe's most prominent commercial areas following land reform? This section focuses on Mvurwi area of Mazowe district, a centre for tobacco and horticulture production, increasingly being delivered by small-scale producers on A1 resettlement land. The FTLRP resulted in all but Mazowe Citrus Estate farms and Forrester Estate farms being acquired and resettled under A2 and A1 (5,290 settlers) models (Matondi and Chikulo 2012). Mazowe Citrus Estate remains the country's biggest producer of oranges, lemons and limes, while Forrester Estate is protected under the BIPPA, through the Ministry of Finance (ibid.), and produces substantial output of tobacco, seed maize, citrus, and winter peas. Commodity production trends are differentiated across settlement models, some by smallholder farmers, others by the LSCF producers, either for export markets, externally financed through contract farming or as food crops for the domestic market (Moyo 2011a), mostly self-financed (Shonhe 2018).

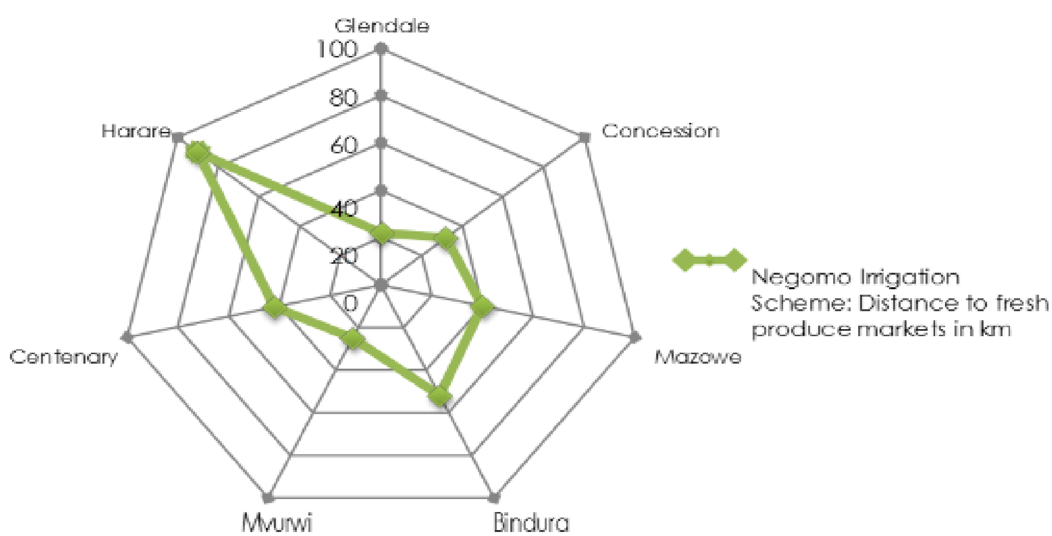
Due to the unique settings offered in Mvurwi area for studying agrarian change, several scholars have undertaken studies in this area, from which we draw lessons on the levels and impact of commercialisation and state practice. As Hanlon et al. (2013) noted in their discussion, some farmers in Mazowe now grow tomatoes and tobacco as cash crops and maize as a staple food. For instance, Fanuel, from Normadale farm in Mazowe, started by growing 1ha of tomatoes before he started financing the production of other crops such as tobacco and maize. Hanlon et al. (2013) observed that while the level of commercialisation is high among A2 farms, A1 farms are not necessarily facing low levels of commercialisation. For instance, more than 53 percent of A1 farmers settled at Kiara in Mazowe were running on a commercial basis (ibid.).

Ruzivo Trust, Scoones and others have studied agrarian change dynamics, with evidence showing that commodity production differs across settlement types and the level of commercialisation is greater among LSCFs and A2 farms compared to A1 and CA settings. As Matondi and Chikulo (2012: 2) observed, maize accounts for 50 percent of all the cropped land and is followed by groundnuts, tomatoes and potatoes in Mazowe district. The marketing of horticulture is generally linked to local and national markets, as the Negomo irrigation scheme commodity linkages shown in Figure 4 illustrate.

and Chikulo 2012; personal observations). Tomato production is therefore highly integrated into the local and national economy through both production and circulation. With regards to tobacco, by 2013, 5,596 producers from Mazowe district produced 14.5m kg of the crop on 7,362.5ha and earned US$52.1m. Maize is marketed in the locality to villagers, the GMB and middle-men traders who sell to surrounding towns and Harare, as shown in Figure 5a and 5b. A combination of these crops does not only provide opportunities for income earnings and food security but is a source of commercialisation across the settlement models in Mazowe district. The case studies are located within the A1 plots and reveal that commercialisation pathways are no longer confined to large-scale farming, as was the case in the pre-2000 period.

Figure 5a illustrates the tobacco input and output markets, which are linked to independent and contract farming. The input markets are in Mvurwi farming town and are a source of fertilisers, chemicals and fuel. A network of former farm compound workers across Mvurwi and Mvurwi town residents provide a source of labour for tobacco and agricultural activities. However, for Toro households (Figure 5a), the families tend to rely on family labour for permanent labour from Wendri compound. Proceeds from agricultural sales have mainly been applied towards payment of school fees for farmers' children in Harare and some local schools, purchase of clothes in Mvurwi shops and the

Figure 4: Negomo Irrigation Scheme: distance to markets



Source: Compiled from Zimbabwe Elections Commission and Elections Resource Centre, 2016.

While tobacco is marketed either through contract farming and auction floors, tomatoes are marketed in Mazowe, Kwekwe, Concession and Mbare in Harare, Mvurwi, Glendale and Nzwimbo growth point (Matondi

purchase of groceries at Msondedi and Mvurwi towns. To this extent, Mvurwi farmers engaged in tobacco production have increased their level of agricultural commercialisation.

Figure 5a: The Toro linkages

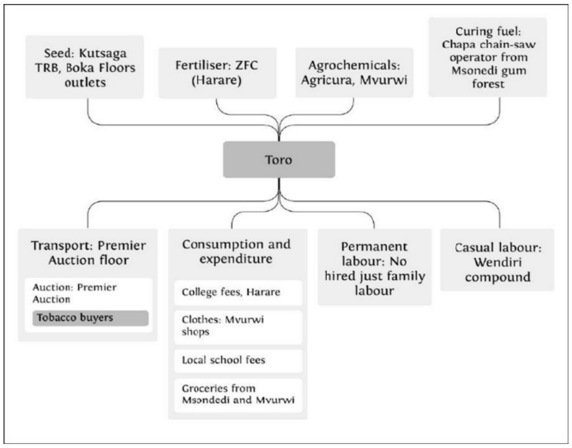
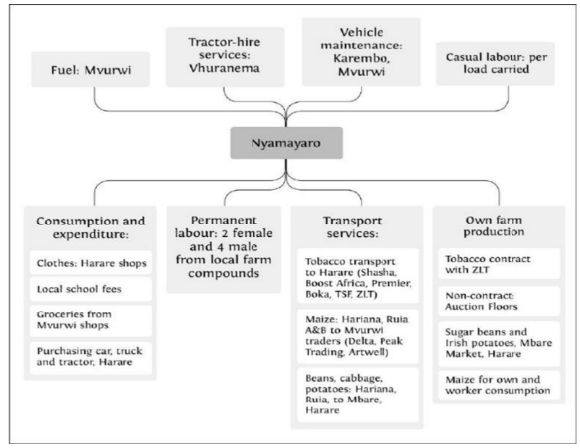


Figure 5b: The Nyamayaro linkages



Source: Compiled from Zimbabwe Elections Commission and Elections Resource Centre, 2016.

Figure 5b is centred on the Nyamayaro household and traces the input and output markets, which also show that the local economy is driven by the agrarian economy, linked to tobacco production. Nyamayaro input markets are mainly centred on the Mvurwi farming economy: fuel, tractor hire, vehicle maintenance and casual labour supply. The output market shows that the level of commercialisation is linked to transport services, consumption patterns, labour use and farm production patterns.

Crop production patterns are driven by financial returns and access to credit. Farmers' choice of tomatoes is driven by the high commodity demand and assured productivity in cases where irrigation facilities are available. In the case of tobacco, international capital has generally availed financial support through contract farming. The government has supported tobacco production as part of its bid to raise export income. Over the years, tobacco production has received favourable conditions, which has resulted in many households across the settlement models participating in its production. Favourable tobacco financing options and marketing associated with contract farming and cash sales have attracted farmers to produce the crop. Farmers involved in tobacco and tomato production have therefore generally accumulated capital and have built houses on the farms and in Mvurwi town (Scoones 2016) and Harare,[3] demonstrating deepening commercialisation of the sector.

Mvurwi thus offers a microcosm of the wider picture discussed earlier. Large-scale estate production, linked to international capital, sits alongside medium-scale farming, which is struggling to be established despite significant support through subsidy programmes. In the same vein, the Mvurwi case shows that small-scale farming – in both communal and A1 areas – dominates in terms of area and numbers of people involved, and has been supported by government programmes, particularly associated with election years, with limited scope for commercialisation. However, beyond these broader patterns we can see the emergence of commercial activities associated with tobacco (and links to contract farming) and horticulture (with urban markets, aggregation and trade being significant). These have emerged especially in the A1 areas, where relatively larger land areas, and some irrigation potential, have made such commercialisation pathways possible. In many ways, these have occurred independently of government support and subsidy regimes, as these have been intermittent, inconsistent and politically targeted. Most farmers in these areas have simply got on with developing their farming operations through building their commercial practices, with support from their own production as well as links to markets and capital, via a range of contracting companies.

In this sense, the wider political economy of agriculture in Zimbabwe has less effect, and the subsidy and support regimes become more performative and symbolic rather than having much tangible effect. In part, this is explained by diminishing state capacity in rural areas for delivery, management and control, and in part because the reach of party politics – outside of election times when it is intense – is fragmented and poorly coordinated, with only some local elites (for example, high-ranking party officials, councillors, headmen and some military official and bureaucrats) benefiting from state patronage.

In sum, at a local level, the political economy of agricultural commercialisation looks different; while shaped by the wider processes already discussed, many people, in order to survive, must negotiate their way through this in order to produce and sell their products. The local political economy is therefore rather different – more about making deals with traders, input suppliers, contractors and others, than the high politics of the wider national political economy, with people necessarily performing the rituals of being subjects of political control, while having to get on with life and constructing their livelihoods. Many will admit to being privately disgusted by the wider politics, but recognise their agency is limited, and their voices must be kept discreet[4] (Mkodzongi 2013).

6. DISCUSSION: UNDERSTANDING ZIMBABWE'S AGRICULTURAL COMMERCIAL PATHWAYS

Having laid out the historical shifts in political alignment around commercial agriculture and the patterns of economic and political incentives apparent in the confused post-2000 policy setting, illustrated with the case of tobacco and tomato commercial production in Mvurwi, this final section of the paper makes use of Keeley and Scoones (2003) to reveal actor and networks interests that shape and impact on agricultural commercialisation.

In the colonial era, support from the state was firmly in favour of the new white settlers, with many early policies actively undermining competing peasant production. As a new commercial farming sector became established, the CFU became a powerful lobbying group, securing investment and subsidies for white commercial farming. During the UDI era and the presence of sanctions, farming and the rebel Rhodesian state's survival became intimately linked. Massive investments (in dams, roads, etc.) as well as subsidies for inputs were made available for the benefit of white large-scale farmers. In this period, large-scale farming was seen as the ideal: deemed modern, efficient and productive, despite widespread evidence of failure of commercial farms, especially during their establishment phases. By contrast, peasant farming was seen as backward and primitive and in need of improvement – again, despite evidence that in the early colonial era, small-scale African farming systems provided the bulk of the food for the new economy, and its growing mining areas (see Phimister 1986).

After independence in 1980 there was a period of direct support to small-scale agriculture in the communal areas through credit and inputs schemes aimed at advancing welfarist policies, productivity and food security for the country. For a period, the discourse shifted towards the image of industrious and efficient peasant agriculture, if given the right support. Investments in research and extension in the early 1980s, as well as substantial credit and other financing, did indeed boost production in communal areas, particularly in areas with better rainfall (Weiner 1988). Despite some attempts at land redistribution, the broad pattern of a dualistic agriculture – defined still by race, with large-scale and small-scale sitting side by side, but with limited interaction – persisted. While direct subsidies to the large-scale sector declined, the opening up of the economy and the opportunities for trade boosted opportunities as commodity markets became highly integrated into global circuits for cash crops and horticultural products. Through the 1980s and into the 1990s, specialised, high-value agriculture emerged, making considerable profits on export markets. Broadly, in terms of land ownership and patterns of commercialisation, the status quo persisted under the banner 'redistribution with growth', benefiting white capital and backed by international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank.

Following the agreement of an economic reform programme (ESAP) in 1991, pushed by IFIs and donors, the emphasis increasingly focused on growth and the shrinking of state support. The communal area maize boom was short-lived, and government services and availability of credit for smallholders declined significantly (Chimedza 1994). This was the period when a section of large-scale, highly capitalised commercial agriculture boomed, due to expanded domestic markets and the opening of markets under neoliberal globalisation, as well as selective support through preferential trade agreements with blocs such as the European Union (EU). In this period, while still dominated by whites, the large-scale sector saw new black entrants – in some cases, supported by government officials who had bought up land. In this period, the dominant discourse was of an efficient, export-oriented commercial agriculture – a discourse that was supported by a strong coalition across government, the CFU and well-positioned new elites. The perspectives of smallholders and the prospects for more commercialisation for small-scale farming were barely acknowledged, except for some concessions around election times between 2000 and 2013. Lobby groups such as the Zimbabwe Farmers' Union (ZFU) were weak, and while donors invested in small-scale projects in the communal lands, few were geared to scaling up commercial production, as poverty was high and land holdings were too small, which had the effect of undermining efforts towards agricultural commercialisation.

This all changed from 1999/2000, when the political landscape shifted dramatically with the rise of the opposition movement, the contested constitutional referendum and an increasingly fractured ruling party. The land invasions, involving mobilisation of the war veterans' movement and villagers that occurred during 2000-01, resulted in a radically reconfigured agrarian structure (Moyo 2000). Large-scale white commercial agriculture was largely removed in favour of a mix of small- and medium-scale farms, while large estate agriculture (notably the sugar estates) was retained. In this period, the party–state had to balance multiple interests in what emerged as a new 'trimodal' agrarian structure. Small-scale farming now dominated, with the A1 areas offering the potential for surplus production on land areas larger than those found in the old communal areas, with greater scope for commercialisation. The rural areas, and the mass of people in both communal and A1 areas, were crucial to the electoral support of ZANU-PF. At the same time, medium-scale farming and an emerging middle class – together with politically connected elites, security forces, business people and others on A2 farms – became another important constituency for ZANU-PF. Further large-scale estates were also significant, as the state sought alliances with international capital to offset some land reform demands, needing to retain access to such revenue flows in the face of a decline in the national economy, the flight of investment and the international sanctions ('restrictive measures') regime. These two groups became a hub for agricultural commercialisation and (in the case of the first) patronage, as government support for crop production came through, albeit at changing levels.

Discourses on viability in this period were contradictory. Some arms of the state and the party–military elite supported large- and medium-scale agriculture as the only route to reviving the economy and as a source of accumulation possibilities for themselves. Others advocated a smallholder route, recognising the electoral importance of the rural vote, as well as the potential of the A1 farming areas as a site of a growing number of petty commodity producers accumulating from below. Tensions between such discourses – and the associated actor networks – are reflected in struggles over land and patronage-based allocation of resources.

Subsidy regimes, as discussed above, have focused on both small-scale and medium-scale farmers, often with electoral/patronage calculations in mind. Meanwhile, opposition groups, while accepting the irreversibility of the land reform, failed to articulate a rural policy, while a few argued for the retention of a large-scale farming sector through external investment and joint ventures. In any event, the opposition is seen as aligned to white capital and therefore opposed to small-scale farming patterns. However, much of the opposition policy positions appear driven by ideological orientation, which leans towards less substantive rights (democracy, property rights and rule of law), aligned to white capital and therefore favouring agricultural commercialisation.

As a result, the resettled farmers and CA smallholder farmers have tended to vote for the ruling party in an effort to protect their plots, thereby ensuring ZANU-PF's continued retention of power. A fluid property regime in which beneficiaries of the land reform have not been given secure tenure also favours the ruling ZANU-PF. This tends to extend the fear factor which gained prominence in the 2008 presidential run-off, undermining multi-party democracy in Zimbabwe.

Yet, as the brief case study of Mvurwi suggested, there is, in many ways, a disconnect between the day-to-day practices of local people trying to negotiate livelihoods by producing crops for market, and the wider political machinations of Zimbabwe's fraught political economy. While patronage politics, subsidy regimes and selective state support palpably affect certain elites, most people must get on with life and make day-to-day deals in what is a highly uncertain, often risky context whereby manoeuvring within a local political economy is essential if tobacco is to be sold, and vegetables marketed.

Today, commercial farming in Zimbabwe is at a crossroads, where political economy – perhaps more than factors of productivity, technology or labour – influences production and accumulation outcomes with a scope for commercialisation from below. Political struggles over the control of the state and its limited resources revolve around land and agriculture as they have always in Zimbabwe, but this time with greater confusion and uncertainty. The story of agricultural commercialisation in Zimbabwe tells a story about how power, actors and networks have shifted over the years, linked to state practice, as the paper has revealed. Agricultural commercialisation and rural politics are tied to the two forms of contract farming (independent, targeting export cash crops, the command agriculture, targeting food crops for the domestic market), with far-reaching implications for Zimbabwe's disarticulated economy.

7. CONCLUSION

The changed agrarian structure in Zimbabwe has reconfigured the scope for commercialisation shaped by developing discourses, power, actor networks and interests of differentiated classes. The changing configurations of power and associated actor networks and interests over time influence state policy and practice, impacting on commercialisation of agriculture in the country. However, government support generally impacts negatively on the commercialisation of the input and output markets even though ZANU-PF has benefited from positive electoral outcomes since 2000. A comparative longitudinal inter-sectoral agricultural study in Mvurwi will help shed light on ongoing state support and commercialisation, and how these intersect with policy design and electoral outcomes. Ongoing state programmes, joint ventures, PPPs, command agriculture and some independent programmes such as contract farming and on-farm income re-investment have had far-reaching implications for agricultural commercialisation, accumulation and class formation trajectories for households across the settlement models, despite contestations on ideology, discourse and policy intentions, within the bureaucracy and government departments.

Estate	Farming activities	Partnership model	Private sector partner	Year of establishment
1. Chisumbanje	• Sugarcane production • Ethanol production	Joint venture	Green Fuel (Pvt) Ltd and Macdom Investments (Pvt) Ltd	BOT in 2009 but converted to joint venture in 2013
2. Middle Sabi	• Sugarcane production	20-year build-operate-transfer (BOT)	Rating Investments (Pvt) Ltd	2009
3. Umguza plots – 45ha	• Horticulture, maize and wheat	10-year rehabilitate-operate-transfer (ROT) arrangements	Honourable O.M Mpofu	
4. Katiyo (193ha Rumbizi & Chiwira Sections)	• Green leaf tea production	12-year management contract	Eastern Highlands Plantations Limited	2009
5. Mkwasine	• Game/safari hunting	5-year management contract	Zambezi Hunters (Pvt) Ltd	2010
6. Nandi	• Sugarcane production	5-year management contract arrangement	Mangwa Quip (Pvt) Ltd	2010
7. Fair Acres	• Soyabeans (summer) and wheat (winter)	5-year share farming arrangement	Northern Farming (Pvt) Ltd	2014

8. Jotsholo	• Cotton seed production	1-year renewable contract farming arrangement	Chinarda (Pvt) Ltd	2014
9. Antelope	• Maize (summer) wheat (winter)	5-year management contract	Trek Petroleum (Pvt) Ltd	2014
10. Ngwezi	• Maize (summer) wheat (winter)	5-year share farming arrangement	Trek Petroleum (Pvt) Ltd	2015
11. Sedgewick	• Livestock rearing	5-year grazing contract	Madzimbabwe Asphalt	2015
12. Doreen's Pride	• Livestock rearing, maize and wheat	10-year contract farming arrangement	Trek Petroleum (Pvt) Ltd	2015

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1. This research was conducted with funding from UK aid from the UK government. The findings and conclusions contained are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect positions or policies of the UK government or the Department for International Development.
2. Personal interview, Tafara, Mvurwi, 28 November 2016.
3. Personal interview, Tafara, Mvurwi, 28 November 2016.
4. ibid.

Citation: Shonhe, Toendepi. (2018) 'The Political Economy of Agricultural Commercialisation in Zimbabwe' APRA Working Paper 12, Future Agricultures Consortium

ISBN: 978-1-78118-451-6

The Agricultural Policy Research in Africa (APRA) programme is a five-year research consortium. APRA is funded with UK aid from the UK government and will run from 2016-2021.

The programme is based at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), UK (www.ids.ac.uk), with regional hubs at the Centre for African Bio-Entrepreneurship (CABE), Kenya, the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS), South Africa, and the University of Ghana, Legon. It builds on more than a decade of research and policy engagement work by the Future Agricultures Consortium (www.future-agricultures.org) and involves new partners at Lund University, Sweden, and Michigan State University and Tufts University, USA.

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