

FOOD SYSTEMS UNDER STRESS (FSUS) PROJECT

COUNTRY PROFILE:

ZIMBABWE

BY

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September 1993

Final Version

FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION:
THE EXPERIENCE OF ZIMBABWE
SINCE INDEPENDENCE IN 1980

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A Paper Prepared for the FOOD SYSTEMS UNDER STRESS Research
Project, September 1993.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe was one of the few African countries that received international acclaim or recognition for its "success" story in agricultural development in the 1980s. This recognition was generally but mistakenly equated with the elimination of hunger among the Zimbabwean population. Zimbabwe was obviously food secure at the national level during the early to late 1980s and had on several occasions exported maize to its neighbouring countries during the first 10 years of independence. The positive contribution of the peasant/communal sector to this national food self-sufficiency since the early 1980s could not go unnoticed. This was regarded as having been a response to the progressive role played by the state in advancing an effective agricultural incentive package which included better prices, extension, credit, marketing facilities etc.

However, a less acknowledged side of this "success" story was the emergence of considerable evidence to the effect that actually Zimbabwe had a food insecurity paradox, because the tremendous production growth among the communal farmers and hence the full grain silos, were coexisting with considerable transitory and chronic hunger and malnutrition among certain social and geographic sections of the population. Such a contradiction normally arises in developing economies like Zimbabwe with a large peasantry because incorrect assumptions are made by the policy makers concerning this large segment of the population. One general assumption is that peasants produce for own consumption and that they are self-sufficient in agricultural production. It is further assumed that they have enough basic resources for peasant production, but would probably need an incentive package in order to produce extra for the national markets. Zimbabwe generally, operated under such assumptions during the first decade of independence, advanced a marketing package to the farmers and experienced a sharp increase in the market share of maize and cotton from the communal areas. This gave rise to the "success" story picture.

However, because of oversight and lack of correct understanding of the peasant economy in question, the national "success" story in no time co-existed with extreme poverty, hunger and child malnutrition at household level in the communal areas and among commercial farm and low income urban families. A postmortem of the Zimbabwean experience with food and nutrition policies gives rise to several important questions which need attention before policy reformulation. Some of these questions are:

1. How is rural production organised, i.e. what is the distribution of the means of production (land, labour and capital) across the households? Who owns these farming means, who does the actual farming and who controls the distribution of the farm produce (gender issues)?

2. Are peasants self-sufficient in food production?
3. Who among the peasant community is producing for the market and why and who is not producing for the market and why?
4. What are the causes of child malnutrition and who in the community are most affected?
5. What is the level of purchasing power and food distribution network in the communal areas?
6. What have been the coping strategies under food insecurity situations?

Answering such questions will shed light on the poverty levels to be tackled, the food security situation and structural rigidities in the target population. Answers should help in mapping out correct policies for this usually very large part of the population.

This paper discusses Zimbabwe's agricultural policies in the 1980s and how these led to the "success" story; the distribution of this national success among the population; the emerging problems of hunger and malnutrition and their relationship to poverty, food production and distribution. Finally, some thoughts are given on the possible integration of agricultural and nutrition policy during the 1990s and beyond.

2.0 A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN ZIMBABWE

Even though the duality of the Zimbabwean economy inherited at independence is a well known factor to those familiar with the economic history of the country, it does no harm to highlight this phenomenon again as the starting point of this discussion. The dual economy inherited in 1980 consisted of a well developed commercial sector and a neglected rural economy. Land distribution was highly skewed with less than 1% of the population (the white large scale commercial farmers) owning about 50% of the land. The large scale commercial farming sector (LSCF) consisted of over 6 000 large farms of on average 2 500 hectares and the communal areas (CAs) consisted of about 500 000 very small holdings (less than 5 hectares) in comparison to those in the LSCF. The LSCF, serviced with good credit, extension and market support and also located in the best ecological/natural regions I and II, had yields almost 4 times those obtained in the communal areas¹. Almost 90% of the communal areas were in the poorer ecological regions III, IV and V carrying about (60 - 75)% of the population.

More than 67% of the communal areas exceeded their recommended carrying capacity with respect to both human and livestock

¹ There are five agroecological/natural regions in Zimbabwe on the basis of soil type and rainfall pattern. Conditions for arable farming progressively deteriorate as one moves from natural region I to V i.e soils become poorer and rainfall is lower and more erratic.

population densities and this resulted in environmental degradation of a serious magnitude. More than 50% of the families had less than 5 hectares of arable which is considered to be the minimum for basic subsistence and 6% - 12% were landless. About 30% - 33% of the families were cattleless and draught power was generally in short supply in the communal areas, with some animals dying in the prolonged drought conditions and poor management of the grazing land (Central Statistical Office, 1982). In 1980 only 2% of the communal area farmers received credit; extension and market facilities were scarce and generally the farmers lacked adequate support services (Amin and Chipika 1989; Agritex 1989)². Loss of male labour through migration into towns in search of jobs resulted in household economies which were highly dependent on remittances for their food needs and the purchase of agricultural inputs (Bonnievie 1987). All these factors resulted in the natural evolution of a society in which a few better-off farmers had managed to survive through the harsh conditions while the majority were poor households struggling to survive.

3.0 AGRICULTURAL POLICY THRUST IN THE 1980s

In an attempt to redress this inherited situation, policy statements in the First Five Year National Development Plan (1986) for example, included the need for a land reform and the efficient utilisation of land; raising living standards especially for the rural population; increased employment opportunities; development of science and technology and the balance between environment and development. As far as agriculture was concerned the policy thrust in the early 1980s could be seen as having been targetted at three major objectives:

1. stimulating large scale production;
2. stimulating small farmer cash and food crop production and marketing; and
3. stabilising national food supplies.

These policy thrusts were adopted in order to ensure national food self-sufficiency, improve communal area household incomes and general standards of living in an effort to redress urban-rural and racial imbalances or inequalities inherited at independence, to save and earn more of the much needed foreign currency and also to consolidate political power and support in the rural areas.

Several less interventionist strategies were used as a package in order to achieve these goals. The output price incentive for major food and cash crops was introduced with the nominal prices of maize and cotton rising by about 80% in the first 10 years. This was introduced as a blanket policy to the whole agricultural sector.

² The ratio of the number of extension workers to communal area farmers was 1:1200 in 1980 but by 1988 it had improved to 1:800 after deliberate efforts by the state to improve support to communal farmers (Agritex 1989).

Guaranteed markets for small grains (millets, sorghum etc) were provided in an effort to encourage their production in the marginal areas of the country. There was an improvement in the services provided by agricultural institutions to small farmers such as extension advice, marketing, credit and agricultural research. From 1979/80 to 1985/86, credit to communal farmers increased about 50 times in amount and about 30 times in the number of loans; marketing depots, extension agents were all increased significantly³. Credit was given in the form of a crop package, that is improved seed, fertilizer etc⁴.

Regarding the more interventionist policies, some 2.8 million hectares of former large scale farm land abandoned or underutilised because of the war were purchased for resettlement. By 1987 2.37 million hectares had been resettled with 40 000 families. Up to 1986 yields were reported to be 88% of those planned despite the drought and other problems of new settlements. However, performance has been found to differ across schemes in different regions and also between owners and non-owners of cattle. On the whole however, the pace of resettlement has not been very significant in comparison to the target of 237 000 families planned for resettlement during the first 10 years of independence 1981 - 1990. By July 1990 only a total of 52 000 families, which is about 22% of the numbers planned, had been resettled (The Herald, 26 July 1990)⁵.

The aggregate results of these agricultural policies adopted between 1980 to 1986 form the "success" story of Zimbabwe's agriculture in the 1980s. During this period per capita cereal production increased by 80%, aggregate food production had an annual growth rate of about 2.5%, agricultural output growth rate

³ The number of AFC loans to communal areas rose from 2 850 in 1979/80 to 97 761 in 1985/86 and during the same period the quantity of loans to communal areas increased from Z\$478 000 to Z\$52 189 000 (Amin 1988). In 1980 total GMB depots were 34 of which only 3 were in communal areas but by 1986 the GMB directly controlled 51 depots of which 20 were in communal areas and almost all came into existence after 1980. In addition to these the GMB also had 56 collection points and several mobile units for grain collection from the rural areas (Rohrbach 1989). The number of communal farmers registered with the GMB rose from 60 000 in 1981 to 295 981 in 1986 (Thomson 1988; Rohrbach 1989) and by the end of the decade, the GMB controlled about 60% to 86% of maize marketed from communal areas (Harriss 1986).

⁴ Fertilizer delivered to communal areas increased from 25 000 metric tons in 1978/79 to 115 000 tons in 1985/86. During the same period improved seed delivered to communal areas increased from 4 500 metric tons to 31 000 tons.

⁵ This slow progress in land re-distribution has been blamed on several factors including the lack of finance, the willing buyer - willing seller basis imposed by the Lancaster House constitution on the acquisition of land, lack of suitable land availability on the market and probably the general state policy which was in favour of gradual rather than radical reforms in the economy as a whole.

was about 3.5%, maize output doubled as did the area under maize cropping and by 1986 there were 2 million tonnes of maize in stock and this was nearly 3 years' supply. By 1989 the communal areas supplied about 63% of marketed maize, 90% of sunflower and an increasing share of cotton. All this indicated that communal farmers were responsive to economic policy stimulants.

However, around 1987, because of increasing transport bottlenecks and other constraints on the economy, and also because of the apparent relaxation on the part of the state following the "success" story, the efforts to distribute seed, fertilizer etc to the communal areas either stopped or became minimal. As a result, the "success" story became gloomy. In addition, during the second half of the 1980s decade, the national economy as a whole was generally stagnating. Unemployment, inflation and the government budget deficit were all on the increase. In response to this economic crisis, the government of Zimbabwe adopted the IMF/World Bank supported Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) in 1990. The short-run hardships of ESAP were unfortunately worsened by the effects of the worst drought in Southern Africa during the 1991/92 agricultural season. Zimbabwe having exported all the food reserves under the recommendations of ESAP found itself importing maize at 3 times the domestic price a few months later. The food crisis reached its peak during this period.

4.0 CHILD WELFARE POLICY THRUST IN THE 1980s

At independence one of the priorities of government was to improve health conditions for the large black population segment who had been disadvantaged during the colonial times. In order to achieve this, government adopted a "free"/state financed primary health care system. The first decade of independence was characterised by infrastructure rehabilitation and provision in the form of new clinics and hospitals, schools, bridges, roads, water and sanitation facilities to once neglected communities. As a result, immunisation coverage expanded from 25% to over 85% of all the children between 1980 and 1989 (Government of Zimbabwe, November 1992). Infant mortality rate declined from 88 to 61 per 1 000 live births, while weight-for-age child malnutrition declined from 21% to about 12% during the same period. Thus, child malnutrition concerns in Zimbabwe were just part of the broad policy on health and child welfare which was primarily the responsibility of the Ministry of Health. Nutrition policies were not purposely linked to agricultural policies during the first decade of independence.

5.0 ZIMBABWE'S FOOD INSECURITY PARADOX

While the agricultural policies of the early 1980s seemed to concentrate mainly on redressing some historical national imbalances,⁶ their impact on the rural economy went unchecked and/or unnoticed for the first 5 or so years of independence. This led to a perpetuation and worsening of inequalities among the rural population. In other words, in 1980 national imbalances were such an overriding phenomenon to the extent that intra-communal and intra-household inequalities were not considered to be an important issue to be addressed by policy.

A postmortem of the "success" story however, reveals a highly skewed distribution of the successes. Surveys conducted on some of the communal areas seem to indicate that state support in most cases reached only the few better-off parts of the community and not the majority poorer households. Thus, about 25% of the communal farmers received credit by the mid-1980s, indicating how extension services still generally favoured the better-off but minority master farmers (Chipika 1987; Vengesa 1985)⁷. Likewise, whereas the whole of the communal areas were responsible for about 50% of the maize and cotton deliveries to the Grain and Cotton Marketing Boards by the mid-1980s, the overall performance when disaggregated showed extreme regional inequalities. For example, communal areas in the 3 higher rainfall provinces of Mashonaland West, East and Central (and these are only 18 out of the 170 communal areas in the country) contributed about 70% of the maize "surplus" in good years and up to 90% in drought years (Amin and Chipika 1989). In contrast, the overcrowded communal areas in the drier natural regions IV and V, amounting to 5 provinces, provided

⁶ Remember that resettlement has not been effective in redressing the national land imbalance, but the other less interventionist agricultural policies involving institutional re-orientation seem to have had a significant impact on the farming sector.

⁷ In the communal areas of the Masvingo province, Chipika (1987), found that 90% of the cattless households were non master farmers while 88% of households with 10 or more cattle were master farmers or trainees. Master farmers farmed on average 2.4 to 4.1 hectares while non master farmers had on average 1.66 to 2.4 hectares. Encouraged to use higher yielding technologies, the master farmers performed better with an average maize yield of 36 to 39 90-kg bags per hectare and recording higher market sales while the non master farmers averaged 15 to 19 bags per hectare and recorded lower sales. Vengesa (1985), obtained similar results for Mashonaland Central. These studies seem to indicate that state policies on extension and marketing tended to impact mostly the better-off farmers deepening further the inherent inequalities in these communal areas and leaving behind a relatively large group of poor, less endowed households faced with food insecurity. At the moment however, Agritex is experimenting with the method of farmer groups in an effort to reach the poorer farmers and reduce the noted imbalance (Truscott 1985; Bratton 1987).

between 10 - 30% maize sales to official markets⁸. Thus, large groups of the poorer farmers with little or no cattle, labour and poor land were excluded from the increased production of the 1980s and for them land reorganisation alone would not solve the problems of low production and low standards of living. The main problem in rural agriculture currently manifests itself in three facets: as a general poverty, food insecurity and child malnutrition. The three are interdependent and they will be discussed in that context.

5.1.1

Poverty, Food Insecurity And Child Malnutrition: The Evidence

Even though Zimbabwe could boast of national food self-sufficiency during the 1980s⁹, holding in stock 30 - 35% more than the estimated domestic requirements,¹⁰ it could not boast of adequate food security at the household level. This household food insecurity significantly surfaced through the high levels of under-five child malnutrition in the communities of commercial farm workers, communal farmers, resettlement farmers and domestic workers. Using the weight-for-age index, it had been found out that malnutrition nationwide affected about 1 in 6 Zimbabwean children between 2 - 5 years old and was as high as 25 - 30% in the drier southern regions of the country. Stunting, an indicator of chronically inadequate food intakes affected about 30% of Zimbabwe's 2 - 5 year olds and was as high as 37% in Matebeleland South province (Central Statistical Office 1988; Ministry of Health 1985, 1987, 1988 and 1989). All this was a significant pointer to the existence of chronic food insecurity especially in the drier communal lands in addition to transitory food insecurity caused by drought.

The causes of malnutrition are many but among those currently cited as high ranking in Zimbabwe are: inadequate and inappropriate food distribution, poverty as reflected in the poor socio-economic status and generally poor health conditions. Surveys conducted in the Mashonaland West and Matebeleland South provinces of Zimbabwe

⁸ The consistently highest maize selling communal areas over time have been: Mangwende (Mashonaland E), Hurungwe (Mash. W), Chiweshe (Mash. Central), Guruve (Mash. Central), Zvimba (Mash.W), Mukwichi (Mash.W), Chinamhora (Mash.E), Uzumba (Mash.E), Chirau (Mash. W), Musana (Mash. Central), Chikwaka (Mash. E), Wedza (Mash.E), Kandeya (Mash. Central), Madziwa (Mash. Central), Mhondoro (Mash.W), Chiduku and Sabinorth in Manicaland.

⁹ President Mugabe received the World Hunger Prize as a symbol of international recognition for the country's efforts in sustaining agricultural success.

¹⁰ The Herald 14/6/90 p.4, Zimbabwe's major newspaper, reported that the country was heading for another huge food surplus, 35% more than the domestic requirements.

between 1987 and 1992 clearly demonstrate the existence of marked inequalities in the socio-economic status of rural households. (Chipika and Amin 1992, 1993). Mashonaland West is one of the provinces ranking high in "surplus" maize production and is under natural regions II and III, while Matebeleland South is a dry, mainly livestock ranching economy in the worst natural regions IV and V. The research findings showed that despite the extreme agroecological differences in the two provinces studied only about 6 - 10% of the peasant households could be described as relatively successful in both areas while about 20% in Mashonaland West and as much as 70% in Matebeleland South were households in absolute poverty. These absolute poverty households had little or no means of production and external incomes for survival¹¹. It was the small 10% relatively successful peasantry who were mostly responsible for increased agricultural output sales to national markets, thus providing the "success" story picture during the 1980s while overshadowing massive poverty and suffering in these areas. In both areas studied it was noted that between 75 - 90% of the households had incomes far below their rural poverty datum lines. Approximately 40 - 50% of the households were chronically food insecure in terms of both their own production and purchasing power. Poverty and food insecurity were concentrated in the absolutely poor category as expected, but were also significantly present in the middle peasantry. Child malnutrition surveys showed stunting levels of 32 - 36%. Again these were in the middle and absolutely poor peasant categories, showing that general poverty has a bearing on food insecurity and child malnutrition levels in the rural areas. Any policies of agriculture and nutrition therefore need to take into account these specific historically stable socio-economic structures in order to have targetted impact.

Besides looking at the poor socio - economic status of rural households as the cause of food insecurity, one also needs to understand the paradox of hunger in a food surplus nation in terms of the distribution of purchasing power and food accessibility among the population. This is because food security is a matter of

¹¹ Evidence is also coming up in the findings under this research project that there is very significant gender differentiation in the ownership of agricultural means of production and incomes in addition to the intra-household differentiation so far clearly established. Traditionally women have no legal land user rights in the communal areas of Zimbabwe except under special circumstances of say, the death of the male head of household. The research results in Mashonaland West are indicating that women do not own land, draught animals and important agricultural implements in male headed households. Women are however the major performers of agricultural production activities whose output distribution is controlled by the males, who own the major means of production. Contrary to common belief, means of production in communal areas are not collectively owned in the households. About 90% or more of them are individually owned by those who will have purchased them. Women are generally disadvantaged in this respect because in the initial instance they are traditionally discriminated against in education and hence also in wage employment so that in all probability they do not have the money to purchase their own agricultural implements. Thus, they are naturally reduced to the role of the providers of unpaid agricultural labour in the rural areas.

access to sufficient food through either own production, purchasing on the market or both.

Historically and even currently in Zimbabwe, state agricultural policy has been focused on surplus grain producers: more Grain Marketing Board (GMB) depots for the sale of crops, producer price incentives, Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC) credit recouped from crop sales etc. This concentration on the output and sales side assumes the existence of rural surplus producers. However, in the communal areas in natural regions IV and V where about 60% of the communal population lives, the majority of the households sell little or no grain and often must rely on market purchases in order to meet their food needs. This means that overall in these areas the sales of surplus households are not sufficient to meet the grain demand by deficit households. This implies that part of the possible solution to the problem of food insecurity in these areas is to ensure a reliable or constant inflow of grain at affordable prices.

However throughout the 1980s, the GMB, which was the marketing parastatal with monopoly rights over the purchase of a number of controlled crops, including most of the food grains, did not view its mandate to include the distribution of grain from surplus areas to deficit rural areas¹². Thus, the GMB's unidirectional distribution of food crops from rural to urban centres assumed rural self-sufficiency in grain (Blackie 1984) which, as we have noticed, was a grossly misleading assumption. At the same time there were official restrictions on the movement of grain by private traders between Zone A (urban and commercial farming areas) and Zone B (communal areas) and from surplus communal areas to deficit communal areas (or between communal areas) unless sanctioned by the state in the form of drought relief food. Together with the fact that it was generally unprofitable for private traders to be involved in the grain movement business at the ruling selling prices, this meant that grain was collected from the communal areas by the GMB, channelled into urban centres for storage and milling, and then taken back to rural areas as substantial quantities of urban milled maize meal by private traders to be sold at significantly higher prices than locally milled maize (Jayne, Chigume and Hedden-Dunkhorst 1990). Therefore, this whole question of hunger and malnutrition in Zimbabwe's communal areas seemed to be also significantly linked to the food distribution system in the country.

Coping strategies under food insecurity have included state food handouts/drought relief food, food-for-work programs, food relief programs by non-governmental organisations, child supplementary

¹² This was not surprising considering the added financial burden that would result from the GMB distributing grain to several dispersed areas with poor road and trading facilities, when already the parastatal was operating under huge deficits.

feeding programs, remittances from relatives in towns, food purchases using non-agricultural incomes and relying on wild foods in some instances.

From the above discussion, one is left wondering whether Zimbabwe's agricultural policies of the 1980s were indeed a "success" story of racing against hunger and poverty for the majority of the population in the communal areas. According to the evidence given in this paper, it seems that the policies raced too far ahead of the real problems which are now emerging in the form of hunger, malnutrition and poverty. A pause for thought on Zimbabwe's agricultural and nutrition policies at this moment seems most appropriate in order to help in the mapping of a correct strategy for food and nutrition in the 1990s and beyond.

5.1.2 A Comment on Food and Nutrition Policy Making in the 1980s.

While a food policy existed in Zimbabwe during the 1980s, the policy was targetted at national food self-sufficiency. This target was achieved at the expense of household food security. Throughout the first decade of independence, agricultural/food policies were formulated independent from nutrition policies. The former fell under the mandate of the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement while the latter came under the Ministry of Health. The two parent Ministries had no formal co-ordination mechanisms on the issues of food and nutrition. Research findings now show that such a co-ordination is essential if malnutrition problems are to be effectively tackled. Essentially, nutrition objectives in agriculture should ensure the provision of a safe and nutritious food supply which is accessible to all segments of the population at all times. Thus, in reviewing agricultural policies it is important to assess their impact on the food security and nutritional status of the vulnerable groups.

As a result of the research findings on food and nutrition issues at grassroots level and the escalating national malnutrition levels during the last quarter of the first decade of independence reviewed above, a National Steering Committee on Food and Nutrition (NSCFN) was formed in 1990. The NSCFN consists of seven key Ministries namely: Land, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement (Chair); Health (Secretariat); Finance, Economic Planning and Development; Energy and Water Resources Development; Education; Local Government, Rural and Urban Planning and Community and Cooperative Development. The NSCFN was tasked to:

1. Prepare a paper highlighting the nutrition problem in Zimbabwe and generate debate and consultations with all concerned.
2. Critically analyse the prevailing Food and Nutrition situation. This would involve answering the following questions using a wider data-base.
 - Who are the food insecure and malnourished?
 - Where are they located?

- Why are they malnourished?
 - What are the major determinants of food insecurity?
3. Draw policy implications for discussion with relevant sectors to facilitate policy reformulation.
 4. Formulate a Draft Food and Nutrition Policy Document for wide circulation and discussion (NSCFN paper, July 1990)..

So far tasks 1, 2 and 3 have largely been achieved with the help of research work ongoing in the University of Zimbabwe together with some work by non-governmental organisations. Task 4 is the crucial step now required in order to influence food and nutrition policy reformulation.

While initiatives for formulating a Food and Nutrition Policy are already underway at the central government level, it is important for these to have the input of policy implimentors and target groups at grassroot level. So far there is a significant network of both governmental and non-governmental institutions operating at grassroot level on food and nutrition issues. The Ministry of Agriculture has the hierachy of Agricultural Extension Officers, Extension Supervisors, Extension Workers and farmer-groups, all involved in food production at grassroot level. The Ministry of Health and Child Welfare has District Area Co-ordinators, Nursing Staff and Health Workers working on nutrition and general child welfare at grassroot level. The Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Co-operatives (formely Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs) have Community Workers and women's clubs to deal with general health related issues, income generation and child nutrition. In addition to these there are also local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as farmers clubs, unions and savings clubs; foreign developmental NGOs; churches and religious groups and community groups such as "nhimbe"/beer or tea parties and "mushandira pamwe"/informal cooperatives. All these work in the area of food and nutrition related issues. The grassroot network are the policy implimentors and also beneficiaries in some instances. Hence, they will determine to a significant extent the success or failure of a food and nutrition policy.

6.0 FUTURE THRUST FOR ZIMBABWE: AGRICULTURE AND NUTRITION INTO THE 1990s AND BEYOND: RECOMMENDATIONS.

Zimbabwe is certainly confronted with several challenges in agriculture and nutrition for the 1990s. Given the discussion in this paper, the following recommendations are being made:

1. Resettlement efforts, if complemented with a restructuring of the communal areas which continue to hold the majority of the population, might promote development in the communal areas. Restructuring would involve rationalised land use, for example specific designation of arable and grazing land each being properly managed. Arable land also needs opportunities for fallowing and crop rotation, while grazing land requires rotationally time to be redressed. In the good natural

regions I and II it is possible to properly manage mixed farming of crop and livestock on the same land. In fact, the current patterns of land use in the communal areas have in most cases been the result of spontaneous evolution with very little conscious management of the land resource.

2. However, rationalisation of land use alone will not necessarily solve the problems of the poorer households that have no livestock, little labour, no implements, cash or credit. If the criteria of "NEED FOR LAND" is maintained in resettlement and is not overtaken by the desire to favour the minority "efficient" master farmers, and if this access to land is complemented by a collective use of resources for example in farmer groups, provision of credit for the cattleless to buy cattle etc, then some of these poorer households might have their development efforts promoted.
3. In addition extension services suitable for the poorer households need to be emphasized in the early stages of this aided development process, for example by stimulating the use of green manure in place of fertilizer which requires cash or loan income; use of high yielding, more drought and disease resistant seed varieties in place of buying chemicals; zero tillage in place of always needing draught animals etc. In other words, the constraints faced by the majority poor in communal areas and resettlement areas need to be thoroughly investigated and consciously tackled if their livelihoods are to be improved.
4. However, as the supply and incomes side improves, something needs to be done about the food distribution system. While the GMB has done an undeniably successful task in reaching the communal farmers on the supply side, its role would be more consolidated if it was extended to include grain storage at lower levels and redistribution of grain where possible and especially where there is critical need.
5. If this is too costly financially for an organisation which is already making losses in its operations, then probably private trading in grain from the GMB depots and from surplus to deficit areas must be encouraged as a matter of policy. In this way the gap left by the GMB's single-channel system could be effectively filled by other agencies (Jayne and Chosvo 1989). Currently, government has liberalised all grain trading in natural regions IV and V in line with the requirements of the Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP). However, the introduction of complete market liberalisation in Zimbabwe's agriculture, as a way of running away from parastatal monopoly and inefficiencies is likely to be inappropriate because the constraints that formerly weakened private trader competitiveness are still there; namely, acute transport problems, thinly spread out markets, long distances, heavy

initial capital outlay requirements etc. This means that complete market liberalisation would result in the emergence of a few private trader monopolies and in the reproduction of conditions that existed before 1980 when private traders were notorious for paying the desperate producers low prices and reselling grain at very high profits. This trend is likely to re-develop if a policy of complete market liberalisation is adopted. There is no doubt that the advent of state monopoly through the GMB in the communal areas actually improved the returns to the producers even though this was in most cases accompanied by administrative inefficiencies in the payment system. This of course could always be improved over time.

6. Agro-based rural industrialisation would be a useful option in boosting rural purchasing power. Projects such as grain milling, edible oils and peanut butter manufacturing, baking, weaving, soap making, stockfeeds, fruit and vegetable processing etc would have the added advantage of reducing the currently high cost of living in the rural areas where most of these essentials are coming from urban centres. This would also be expected to have a positive impact on nutritional levels.
7. Targetted policy making and implementation in food production, distribution and utilisation is important for the success of food and nutrition policies.
8. A co-ordinated approach by governmental, non-governmental and community interested parties in this important matter is likely to produce better results than the current fragmented setup at grassroot level.

The list of possible policies has not been exhausted, but the point being put across here is that it pays to understand in some detail the livelihood strategies of the community for whom one is making policies in order to avoid having otherwise good policies result in unintended outcomes or reach only the minority, as in the experience of Zimbabwe.

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