

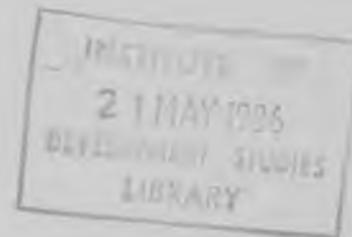
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LAND TENURE AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN LESOTHO



④ URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING PROGRAMME

⑥ DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

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Preface

The land tenure system of Lesotho has been frequently criticized from various quarters as an impediment to agricultural development. However, analytical studies of land tenure and its developmental influences are rather scarce. As a result, the role of this important component of the planning environment of Lesotho remains a controversial issue.

The main purpose of the present report, published in the URPP Research Report Series, is to analyse the nature and functions of the land tenure system and to assess its influence on agricultural development.

The contents are largely a result of research activities undertaken in 1982 in the context of my studies for a Master of Development Studies degree at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, The Netherlands. It is hoped that the report will provide some useful information to planners and other interested parties; it should be seen as complementary to URPP Report No. V on the legal framework and the role of the executive in agricultural development in Lesotho written by Marion Huisman.

Thanks are due to staff of the Geography Department at N.U.L., especially Henk Huisman, for their comments, and to Mrs. Pamela Ownsworth for typing the report.

Roma, Summer 1983

I. V. Mashinini

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Introduction

It is generally recognized that the performance of Lesotho's agricultural sector is very poor. Analysis of production statistics over the last decade shows a fluctuating output at low levels (cf. Huisman, H. 1983).

Because of the low output, Lesotho has to increasingly rely on imports of cereals from neighbouring South Africa. This obviously implies an increased dependence for the country. Commentators on Lesotho's economic situation have identified a number of factors which pose a constraint on an increase of agricultural output. The factors can be subdivided into three groups:

- a. Physical factors. These factors refer to the frequent occurrence of thunderstorms, hail, frost, drought, pests and to soil erosion.
- b. Institutional factors. Among these factors one finds the land tenure system, the structural overgrazing of grasslands, the lack of credit facilities, poor marketing structures, problems in extension and the limited use of modern techniques.
- c. Politico-economic factors. In this group of factors the general dependent nature of the economy and the system of massive labour migrancy are the most prominent.

Extensive concern has been expressed about the land tenure system as one of the growth obstructing factors of an institutional nature (cf. Williams, 1972; Cowen, 1967; ILO 1979). It is frequently argued that a change towards a more individualized land tenure system is desirable for improvement of the agricultural sector's performance. As a result of pressure which has been exercised by donors also holding this opinion, the Lesotho government has recently introduced a reform of land tenure conditions in its development policy (cf. Land Act, 1979).

The object of this study is to assess the influence of customary land tenure on agricultural development in Lesotho.

Two main questions will be paid attention to:

1. What are the nature and functions of the land tenure system of Lesotho?
2. To what extent does the land tenure system, against the background of the specific characteristics of the agricultural sector, form a constraint to agricultural development in Lesotho?

The present report is largely based upon data from secondary sources, both published and unpublished. It is subdivided into three chapters. In chapter one a review will be given of the opinions on the role of customary tenure in agricultural development in Sub Saharan Africa in order to provide some necessary background information. In chapter two the basic characteristics of Lesotho's land tenure system will be presented, while in the last chapter an attempt will be made to systematically analyse the influence of the tenurial system on the country's agricultural development.

CHAPTER ONE

An Analysis of Customary Land Tenure and Agricultural Development in Sub-Saharan Africa

1.1. Introductory Remarks

During the immediate Post World War II era, there was a clear emphasis in Africa and the rest of the Third World on import-substitution industrialization policies as the "engine" of development. Nowadays, increased disillusionment with the performance of this sort of industrialization has led to a shift of emphasis towards rural development, especially agricultural development. Agriculture is expected to, inter alia:

- finance other sectors through foreign exchange receipts from its exports
- supply food and labour to other sectors
- provide employment to the rural labour force and thus ensure equitable distribution of income and
- act as a viable domestic market for domestic products from the other sectors of the economy. (Johnston & Kilby, 1975; Nicholls, 1964).

Agricultural production is a function of three main factors of production viz. land, labour and capital. The use of land in the agricultural production process is influenced by tenurial systems under which it is held. In most countries in Africa south of the Sahara land is held under what is commonly referred to as communal tenure.

1.2. Some basic characteristics of customary tenure system

Tenurial systems in Sub-Saharan Africa may exhibit slight differences from one country or society to the other. However, rights to land are usually based on either kinship or territorial groups as basic units. Under kinship, land is vested first in the clan and then the descent group or extended family. Members of the descent group have use rights to a particular part of land that belongs to the descent group by virtue of its being part of the clan and that the head of that descent group cleared it first (Barrows, 1973). Under territorial groups, land is vested

first in the whole community and then in the Chief who is the territorial ruler on behalf of the community. This power is further sub-vested in headmen who are in charge of various wards under the allegiance of the Chief. Each head of the households under the ward is entitled to the use of part of the land belonging to the ward by virtue of his membership of the community (Yudelman, 1964).

The general philosophy that underlies customary land tenure is that of equity expressed through communal ownership of land. Land belongs to the community, village, lineage or kinship. Members of these collective social units do not own land as private property. Members are only entitled to usufructory rights, and are not allowed to sell or alienate any part of the land without prior consultation with and consent of the community. Members enjoy continued use of the land provided they continually cultivate it and also remain members of the social group. If these conditions are not met, land is normally reclaimed and reverts to the social group for re-allocation. The amount of land that each member gets may vary depending on his dependants' subsistence requirements, availability of arable land and population pressure.

Customary land tenure in Africa has been flexible and adapted to socio-economic and political changes over time. Changes in settlement patterns, population pressure and incorporation of African economies into the World Capitalist system have had influences on the land tenure conditions. Today population pressure and more so increased commercialization of agriculture in Africa and the emergent rural capitalist class are continually reshaping the land tenure away from its communal nature towards more and more privatization. This land privatization trend is reinforced by the sometimes ill-advised agricultural development policies which rely on the emergence of a class of capitalist farmers as a pre-condition for their success.

1.3. Customary land tenure systems : a constraint to agricultural development?

The failure of agricultural development efforts in sub-saharan Africa has sometimes been blamed on customary land tenure. Such blame is often done on the basis that customary land tenure

- fails to provide farmers with security of tenure
- encourages bad land utilization
- cannot be used as security for credit
- leads to fragmentation and sub-division of landholdings.

1.3.1. Security of tenure

Critics argued that farmers do not make long term investments on their landholdings because the land may be taken away from them at any time. This may be done because society needs land to give to new households or sheer jealousy towards the farmer who has improved his land and therefore realizes increased returns. This sort of criticism, however, overlooks the fact that land can only be revoked if the farmer fails to cultivate it for two or more successive years, other than for purposes of fallowing, and/or ceases to perform other political and social functions expected of him as a member of the collective unit that owns the land. Otherwise the farmer enjoys full security of tenure and may often even be able to pass the land down to his descendants (Uchendu, 1968; Verhelst, 1969).

1.3.2. Utilization of land resources

Customary land tenure is further blamed for encouraging bad land use because after harvest, land reverts to society for communal grazing. As a result, firstly, land can only be used for one crop in a year and innovations to introduce new additional crops are hindered. Barrows (1973), however argues that flexibility of customary land tenure to adapt to socio-economic changes has incorporated introduction of perennial cash crops like coffee and cocoa among the Limba and Mende (Sierra Leone). This resulted in a positive change in the land use pattern. The second argument put

forward is twofold and rather contradictory. On the one hand the equity aspect of the land tenure is accused of enabling even bad farmers to continue to farm - badly - while, on the other, in order to secure their land people continually farm it irrespective of whether in a productive or an unproductive manner. This is more so because of the emphasis put by customary regulations on production for subsistence rather than for commercial purposes. One has to realize, however, that unless commercial is interpreted otherwise, customary land tenure has accommodated production for the market, both of cash crops and subsistence crops themselves.

1.3.3. Security for Credit

According to this criticism, because land is not privately owned and not for sale, it has no market value and therefore cannot be used as mortgage or collateral for agricultural credit. Moreover, the more enterprising farmers are unable to acquire more land to increase the size of their holdings. There is, however, increasing doubt whether given the present level of technology in Africa and the Third World in general, there is such a critical shortage of agricultural credit. There seems to be sufficient rural savings which only need to be mobilized by building in incentives into farming vis-a-vis other financial markets (Schultz, 1964; Lipton, 1976). Again, commercial banks prefer to lend to co-operatives rather than individuals who might just pledge land, because of high rates of default and also political complications in land confiscations (Gershenburg, 1971).

1.3.4. Fragmentation of holdings

The principle that each member of society is entitled to a piece of land has often been held responsible for fragmented and uneconomic land holdings which hinder large scale farming. However, it has to be realized that large scale farming is not the only way of increasing output. Very high outputs have been realized on very small holdings. The most important thing is not purely large acreage but the right combination with other factors of production - labour, capital and management.

1.3.5. Concluding Remarks

Often criticisms levelled against customary land tenure err. These errors are caused by insufficient knowledge and understanding, or distorted interpretations of the nature and functions of the system, based on a Eurocentric view that customary tenure is symptomatic of traditional farming and freehold tenure of an advanced one. Hence critics often hurry to make a wholesale condemnation of customary tenure and full-scale recommendation of freehold tenure.

An adequate evaluation of customary land tenure must, however, pay particular attention to the following aspects:

- a thorough study and understanding of the nature and the socio-economic and political functions of the system in specific countries to avoid erroneous criticisms.
- it must consider the flexibility of the tenure to socio-economic and political changes over time and the extent to which such flexibility can be expected in future with development. This could avoid the risk of overhauling the entire system today; only to introduce changes that might pose even more constraints to development in future.
- an exhaustive investigation of other factors than land tenure that influence agricultural development efforts in specific countries is necessary. This might facilitate a better identification of constraints to agricultural development rather than continued blame on land tenure even in cases where other factors could be more influential.
- agricultural development should be interpreted to involve both growth and equity. This should be more so for African situations due to lack of off-farm employment. Evaluation of customary land tenure must therefore assess the extent to which it ensures a more egalitarian distribution of income, employment and other benefits in general in agriculture to the majority of the rural population.

Obviously an evaluation that addresses itself to these specific aspects yields a more meaningful analysis of the relationship between customary land tenure and agricultural development in sub-Saharan Africa.

CHAPTER TWO

Lesotho's Land Tenure System : Some Basic Characteristics

2.1. Legal Framework vis-a-vis Actual Practice

The land tenure system in Lesotho is rather complex. This complexity is caused by two factors. One is the difference between formal land regulations and the actual practice in matters relating to land. The other is the introduction of the new Land Act 1979. Until 1979, the Laws of Lerotholi were the formal legal basis for land tenure. These laws were supplemented by the Land Act 1973 and other enactments, all of which operated as the legal framework until 1979 when they were repealed by the Land Act 1979. The latter Act provides some drastic changes in the land tenure system, to grant people permanent individual rights to the land they hold through new rules on inheritance and a so-called leasehold. Analysis of the legal framework of land tenure is done elsewhere in this URP research report series (Huisman, M; 1983). So far the Land Act 1979 lacks implementation in the rural areas. Therefore, for the purpose of the present study, an outline of the formal framework of traditional land tenure system will be based on the Laws of Lerotholi and aspects of the Land Act 1973 where the latter provided some changes. For each aspect formal regulations will be compared with actual practice in order to highlight some differences.

2.1.1. Land Allocation

In Lesotho all land belongs to the nation. The King is intrusted with the power to administer the land on behalf of the nation. Traditionally, the King had allocated the task of land administration at local level down the hierarchy of chieftainship until headmen on his behalf. Members of the community enjoyed individual use rights over farming land and communal rights on grazing land. The power to allocate and revoke land was vested in the King but was exercised by chiefs on his behalf. LASA (1978) distinguishes four types of use rights to which members of the community were entitled. These were

rights to a residential site, arable land (grazing rights included), gathering of wild products and natural resources and rights to gardens and trees. For this report, rights to arable land are mainly considered.

Traditionally every Mosotho man was entitled to three fields. He could expect two additional ones for every extra wife. The following criteria were used for eligibility to land allocation:

- the applicant had to be a bona fide Mosotho
- be male and married
- acknowledge the supreme power of the King
- be a subject of one of the Principal or Ward Chiefs and be accepted by such a Chief as his loyal subject.
- agree to perform and observe such social obligations as expected of him by the Community.

The procedures to be followed when one applied for an allocation were explicitly stated in the Lands (Procedure) Act 1967 and incorporated in the Land Act 1973 (Section 12) as follows with regard to rural areas:

The applicant filled in a Form "A" and submitted it to his immediate chief. The chief in turn, on receipt of the application, informed the applicant of the date, time and place when he was expected to speak for and support his application in front of a Development Committee. A written record of proceedings that stated the grounds on which land was given was kept for every application. The Chief, or his representative went out with the Development Committee to demarcate the exact boundaries of the land allocated.

In practice, conditions differed somewhat from formal regulations. Not every married Mosotho man has access to land because of increasing population pressure. Population increase is estimated at 2.2 per cent per annum (BOS, 1976). At present 13 per cent of the population is landless (TFYDP, 1980). Table 1 overleaf shows the extent of increasing landlessness after World War II.

Table 1 Landless Households as Percentage of Total Rural Households for Three Census Years 1950, 1960, 1970

	1949-50	1960-61	1969-70
Total Households	161,500	172,956	212,228
Landless households	11,700	14,780	26,919
Percent Landless	7.2	8.2	12.7

Source: LASA : Lesotho's Agriculture : A review of existing information, 1978, V-21.

Moreover, there seems to be a tendency for land to be concentrated in the old households, i.e. those that have settled in the place over a long time. New households have, therefore, to rely heavily on migrant wages today (Speigel, 1980).

The registration of land is poor. This is so due to both lack of cadastral surveys to demarcate land boundaries precisely and the poor level of recording and filing in the rural areas. In practice, therefore, boundary disputes still occur among holders.

2.1.2. Conditions of land-use

Once land was allocated to an applicant, he was expected to cultivate it every season. Provision was made for land to be left fallow in order to regain fertility. A person who wanted to let his field lie fallow had to inform the chief of his intention and reasons for doing so. Practice of crop rotation was left to individual users, but the law bound holders to do contour ploughing and effect anti-erosion measures. After harvest individual rights to land seized and fields were used communally for grazing. Land could not be exchanged or involved in monetary transactions. It could not be transferred by the individual without the approval of the chief and the community of which he is a number.

It is not everybody who, in practice, manages to cultivate their land every year. A number of fields lie

fallow in one season or another. It is estimated that 100,000 hectares lay uncultivated between the years 1973/74 - 1977/78 (IBRD, 1981). The following factors could be responsible for this high rate of fallow:

- lack of oxen
- lack of money with which to hire either oxen or tractors for ploughing
- relative scarcity of ploughing technology even though money might be available
- untimely rainfall and/or

because their owners migrated elsewhere to work temporarily without having made adequate arrangements to have their fields duly cultivated in their absence.

It is only paradoxical that the land which is cultivated every season, is not allowed time to fallow. This continued use, poor use of soil nutrients and lack of adequate crop rotation have led to serious deterioration of the soil fertility and problems of soil erosion.

The practice that fields be used for communal grazing after harvest is waning. Every farmer has the right to plough his fields and cultivate winter crops, if he so wishes. Large hectares of land that have been used for wheat sharecropping between the government and farmers under the food self-sufficiency programme bear testimony to this point. Fencing is not allowed.

Although people were not allowed to transfer land, it would appear that land had in reality been used in exchanges of various sorts. Such as, for instance, in cases where landholders secretly pledged their land to be used by their debtors for a given time as payment (Duncan, 1960). Population increase has created a big demand for land and it is not unusual nowadays that landholders sell part of their fields to other people, especially for residential purposes. This can be witnessed by a spree of isolated dwellings in the fields all over the country, so that in practice a black market exists for land (Mosaase, 1981).

2.1.3. Termination of rights to land

The Laws of Lerotholi (Part 1 Section 7 (1) - (6)) stated four conditions on which land could be revoked - viz:

- failure to cultivate or cause cultivation to land for more than two successive years without adequate reasons.
- if during an inspection a person was found to have land in excess of his subsistence requirements. Such requirements were usually measured in terms of the size of his dependents. One had the right to choose which field(s) to surrender in this case.
- When land was needed for public purposes like development projects and anti-erosion measures and
- if a person transferred from one chief to the other his land reverted to the community for re-allocation.

If land was taken away, the chief first had to inform the affected person of his intention to withdraw his use rights and state the ground for such a withdrawal. The affected person had the right to defend his case in front of a public hearing including the Development Committee. Depending on the outcome of such a hearing case, the defendant had the right to appeal up the hierarchy of Courts until the High Court (Land Act 1973; Sections 13 and 14). It must be realized, however, that in practice it was very rare that fields could be taken away if they were not cultivated for two successive years. An exhaustive inquiry and successive warnings were often done before fields could be revoked. The high rate of uncultivated land mentioned previously bears testimony to this aspect.

2.1.4. Inheritance

According to traditional law land could not be inherited because this could lead to its concentration in a few families over time. After the death of both the husband and the wife their land reverted to the community to be re-allocated if they were not survived by minors.

Sons of the deceased were given first priority when re-allocation was done. This was so on condition that the sons continued to remain subjects of the same chief as their father was and did not as yet have enough fields. Poulter (1976) argues that the sons were given first priority because it was felt that they should continue to enjoy the benefits of the improvements that their family made on the land. In reality, therefore, land continued to remain under use by the same family over years because of this priority given to sons. Again, due to land shortage, people normally stepped down fields for their newly married sons and asked the chief to confirm use rights on them.

2.2. Flexibility of the land tenure system

Customary land tenure in Lesotho was not static. It had adjusted itself to changes in socio-economic and political processes over a century. Politically it had accommodated changes as a result of the nation-building process through amalgamation and consolidation of various tribes under Moshoeshoe I to form the present day Basotho nation in the early to mid-Nineteenth century because of the Lifaqane. Again, invasion(s) of the Basotho by the Boers in the 19th century led to serious losses of land by the former. The land tenure system adjusted itself to increased population pressure on the relic land. The emergent land tenure system also reflected a mixture of social practices by these various social groups that had merged into one nation.

Economically, the land tenure accommodated introduction of new crops like Maize, Wheat and Peas. These crops were introduced by Missionaries in the early 19th century (Cowen, 1967; Sheddick, 1954). Maize was so highly adopted that it has now replaced Sorghum as the staple food of the Basotho. Again Maize and Wheat were so largely adopted that they gained Lesotho the reputation of being renowned as the granary of Southern Africa in the late 19th century and early 20th century (Murray, 1981). Cultivation of Wheat and Peas in Winter forced the land tenure system to adapt itself to a new land use pattern whereby fields could no longer be cultivated in Summer only, hence once per season.

Many factors operated together to bring about a rise in a cash economy and the Country's incorporation into the World Capitalist System. These were increased contact with the outside world, market opportunities raised by the demand for foodstuff supplies in the mines in South Africa, and the subsequent need to acquire modern farming tools through wages and from migratory labour. The land tenure system adjusted itself to changes in farming techniques and facilitated intensive farming for the market. For those farmers who had no capital and technology, the land tenure system accommodated introduction of sharecropping. Through share-cropping, the poor farmers could allow the "Progressive" farmers to use their land and give them a share of the produce.

2.3. Concluding Remarks

The following basic points may be observed about customary land tenure in Lesotho.

- it emphasized equitable distribution of land among the people. This equity was in reality not achieved.

- it was geared towards subsistence production but in reality commercialization of farming has occurred within the system.

- it was able to adjust itself to socio-economic and political changes over time.

CHAPTER THREE

An Analysis of the Influence of Land Tenure on Agricultural Development in Lesotho

3.1. Introductory Remarks

Agricultural development has both quantitative and qualitative aspects. The former involve growth and the latter the distribution of that growth to a majority of the population. Industrialized countries achieved their agricultural development through capital intensive techniques. Although capitalization of agriculture displaced many farmers, there existed well established industries to absorb the labour so displaced. On the other hand, countries like China have shown that through adoption of labour intensive techniques output can be increased and employment provided for a majority of the population within agriculture.

In the Third World today, especially in Africa, absence of developed industries implies that labour intensive techniques be adopted in agriculture. This implication becomes even more necessary in the case of Lesotho, because of its heavy dependence on migrant labour as a source of employment for the majority of its labour force.

3.2. Agricultural Development in Lesotho

The country's economy is predominantly rural. It is based on production of food crops and livestock for consumption. This produce is sold in good years. There are no industries in the country apart from small cottage handicrafts and construction. The economy is highly dependent on remittances from migrant labourers and foreign aid (Van der Wiel, 1977; Ström, 1978; Selwyn, 1975; Murray, 1981). Table 2 below shows the major aspects of Lesotho's economic structure.

Table 2: Estimates of Gross Domestic Product at Factor Cost by Industrial Origin (Percentage Share)

	1967/68	1973/74	1974/75	1975/76	1976/77	1977/78
Agriculture	41.9	49.5	44.0	39.4	43.1	36.8
(Crops)	(25.1)	(27.8)	(20.7)	(15.8)	(25.2)	(20.6)
(Livestock)	(16.8)	(21.7)	(23.3)	(23.6)	(17.9)	(16.2)
Mining &						
Quarrying	2.5	0.3	1.5	2.0	2.5	2.1
Manufacturing	2.1	2.7	4.4	4.3	3.5	1.9
Building &						
Construction	2.2	2.6	1.4	3.1	4.8	9.4
Wholesale &						
Retail	12.8	9.8	14.9	14.4	13.5	12.2
Catering	0.3	3.0	3.3	5.5	5.5	6.2
Transport &						
Communications	1.4	2.6	2.9	2.5	2.6	2.6
Ownership						
Dwellings	15.3	11.5	11.9	11.6	9.9	10.7
Central						
Government	16.3	10.0	8.7	11.2	10.4	13.4
Other	5.2	8.0	6.9	6.2	4.2	4.8
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Third Five Year Development Plan : 1980/81 pp. 8-9.

Table 2 above shows that agriculture contributes more than any other Sector to G.D.P.

Over 90 per cent of the Basotho live in rural areas and most of these people derive part of their income from crop or livestock farming or both (TFYDP : 1980 : 157).

3.2.1. The Production Structure

Agro-ecological conditions in Lesotho are suitable for both crop cultivation and animal husbandry.

Bawden and Carroll (1968) identify four major agro-ecological zones as summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Lesotho's Agro-Ecological Zones

Land Classification	Recommended Land use	Location	Area (km ²)	Percentage of Total Land
1. Land suitable for cultivation	1.1 Semi-intensive	1. Lowland and Orange river valley	2631	8.6
	1.2 extensive		1300	4.2
2. Land suitable for grazing	2.1 Small stock	2. Higher mountain	7697	25.3
	2.2 Large stock	3. Lower mountain	10569	34.4
3. Land suitable for cultivation and grazing	-	4. Lower mountain flats	2201	7.2
	-	5. Foothills	2467	8.1
4. Land unsuitable for agriculture	-	-	3723	12.2
			30588	100

Source: Bawden and Carroll, 1968, p. 75.

In principle crop production is for subsistence, but part of the produce is sold in good years. Major crops cultivated are Sorghum, Maize, Wheat, Beans and Peas. The relative importance of crops cultivated can be seen by the amount of area utilized per crop per annum. This acreage may vary over the years. About ninety per cent of the country's total cultivated areas is devoted to the three main crops, Maize, Sorghum and Wheat (SFYDP: 1975: 73).

Livestock production is another important agricultural activity. Livestock raised are cattle, sheep, goats, horses, donkeys and mules. The relative importance of each category is shown in Table 4 overleaf.

Table 4: Livestock Population by Animal Category (1959/60 - 1979/80) in '000

	1959/60	1969/70	1974/75	1975/76	1976/77	1977/78	1978/79	1979/80
Cattle	546.4	551.5	512.4	482.0	485.5	521.5	560.4	594.2
Sheep	1,466.1	1,655.1	1,584.7	1,364.0	1,128.0	943.9	973.9	1,043.5
Goats	671.7	973.8	885.4	808.0	617.5	615.5	618.3	784.3
Horses	135.0	109.7	114.8	93.0	104.1	103.5	101.7	101.1
Mules	7.4	4.1	2.3	1.8	0.9	0.8	-	-
Donkeys	96.5	89.7	101.7	88.0	88.5	85.4	87.9	88.0

Source: Third Five Year Development Plan: 1980, p. 171;
Annual Statistical Bulletin, 1980, pp. 53-54.

Table 4 shows that sheep, cattle and goats are the most important livestock in the country. Sheep and goats are used both for meat and for production of wool and mohair respectively. Cattle are mostly used for ploughing and milk. Horses, mules and donkeys are used as draught animals. Ownership of livestock is very skewed. In 1976 it was estimated that fifty per cent of the rural households had no livestock and ten per cent owned nearly sixty per cent of the total livestock (Van der Wiel, 1977, p. 85). The total contribution of livestock to the Gross Domestic Product has been estimated at M22.6 million in 1978 (SFYDP, 1975).

The household is the basic unit of production and takes major decisions on the planning and execution of farming activities. It also provides farm labour. A division of labour exists within the household. Heavier farming tasks like ploughing are done by men; clearing of weeds by women and harvesting by both. This division of labour is becoming less important because of the influence of migrant labour. Nowadays, it is common to find women, children and old people involved in ploughing. It has been argued that because the labour provided by the latter is of poor quality, it is responsible for low farm output. Households usually form a working team or working parties (Matsema) to overcome labour constraints. Labour is also hired on a daily basis.

The harsh physical conditions require a rather high capital input into farming. These inputs are oxen, and/or tractor, planters, high quality seed and fertilizers. Failure to include these inputs in farming implies a risk of obtaining poor yields. The differential access to oxen and/or tractor and planters and ploughs affects the farming operation. Murray (1981) states that according to the 1970 agricultural census, 35 per cent of lowlands households owned a plough, more than half owned no livestock at all, and more than 70 per cent of cattle were owned in herds of ten head or fewer.

3.2.2. The Performance of the Agricultural Sector

Productivity per unit of labour and land is low. According to ILO-JASPA (1979) "most surveys show daily returns (to labour) from agriculture of the order of R0.10-0.40 per hectare" (p.87). The average annual remuneration from full-time farming has been estimated at R120.00-R200.00, which is below the Poverty Datum Line (PDL) of R1152.00 for the country (Van der Wiel, 1977, p. 89). Productivity per unit of land is also low. Table 5 summarises productivity per hectare of major crops over the years.

Opinions differ on whether productivity has really declined over the years. ILO-JASPA (1979) states that the World Bank (1975) has estimated a decline of forty per cent between 1950 and 1970, and Wykstra (1978) that of fifty-nine per cent between 1950 and 1976. Based on production figures for 1950, 1960 and 1970, Murray (1981) also comes to the conclusion that productivity has declined. He, however, warns against the danger of extrapolating productivity trends based on unreliable statistical information. ILO-JASPA (1979) itself and Huisman H. (1983) conclude that productivity has been fluctuating over the years and does not show any declining trend. ILO-JASPA's argument is based on data presented in Figure 1.

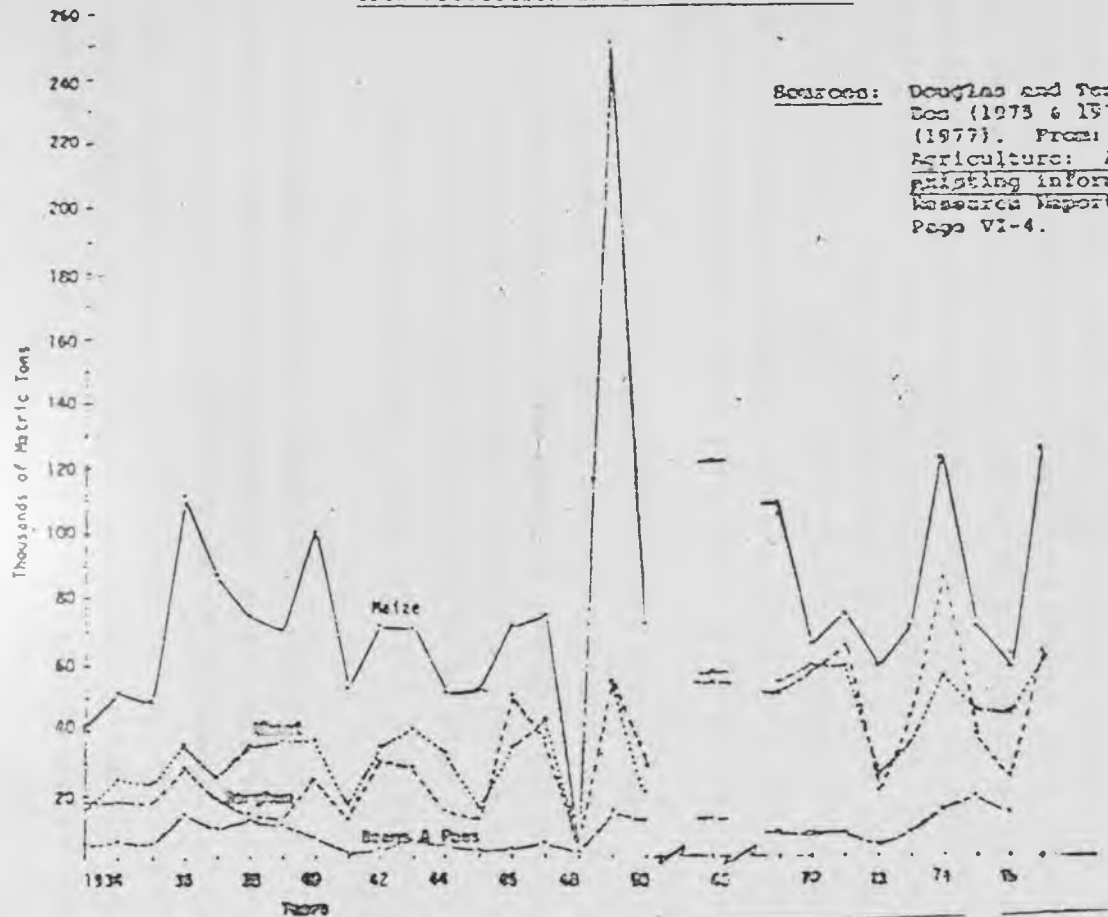
Due to low productivity the country fails to meet its domestic annual basic food requirements. It is estimated that about fifty per cent of basic foodstuffs is imported per annum (TFYDP: 1980 : 157).

Table 5 : Estimated Area, Average Yield and Production of Maize,
Sorghum, Wheat, Beans & Peas : 1960/61 - 1979/80

Yr.	MAIZE			SORGHUM			WHEAT			BEANS			PEAS		
	Harvested Area (ha)	Average Yield (100kg/ha)	Production (Metric Tonnes)	Harvested Area (ha)	Average Yield (100kg/ha)	Production (Metric Tonnes)	Harvested Area (ha)	Average Yield (100kg/ha)	Production (Metric Tonnes)	Harvested Area (ha)	Average Yield (100kg/ha)	Production (Metric Tonnes)	Harvested Area (ha)	Average Yield (100kg/ha)	Production (Metric Tonnes)
1960/61	-	7.38	120000	-	7.83	55000	-	8.5	60000	-	2.45	15000	-	6.85	15000
1969/70	-	5.14	65000	-	6.88	60000	-	5.44	60000	-	2.24	10000	-	3.65	10000
1973/74	129704	9.45	127544	83266	10.0	84014	76591	7.45	57057	19729	3.79	7484	10229	7.02	7178
1974/75	107844	6.52	70292	54774	8.36	37443	55118	8.22	45337	28063	4.77	13384	9982	5.8	5788
1975/76	84827	5.79	49128	44239	5.55	24540	55872	7.9	44640	29656	2.92	8650	10134	5.69	5763
1976/77	80336	15.67	125932	42485	14.67	62313	41676	14.73	61381	14727	14.17	20865	7037	9.99	7032
1977/78	101683	14.08	143168	59280	14.47	85775	42610	13.59	57906	11066	9.74	10783	4348	10.18	4427
1978/79	112263	11.12	124856	51255	13.45	68952	35307	9.52	33529	10151	8.22	8350	5702	12.02	6856
1979/80	110357	9.57	105618	61333	9.81	59285	28952	9.74	28194	6919	5.2	3584	5881	7.75	4561

Sources: B.O.S. Annual Statistical Bulletin, 1980; Second Five Year Development Plan, 1976.

Figure 1.
 Crop Production in Lesotho 1934-1976



Sources: Douglas and Tennant (1953),
 Dox (1973 & 1978), and Makbanya
 (1977). From: Lesotho's
 Agriculture: A review of
 existing information, IASA
 Research Report No. 2, 1978,
 Page VI-4.

3.2.3. An Inventory of Constraints : Some View Points

Different points of view on the causes of agricultural underdevelopment in Lesotho have been expressed by various scholars. In general these views can be classified into three categories, viz. physical deterministic, institutional and politico-economic explanations.

3.2.3.1. Physical Deterministic Explanations

This set of explanations (cf. Smit, 1967; Makhanya, 1979) attributes low agricultural production to the harsh physical environment in the country. Rugged topography enables heavy thunderstorm rains to erode the soils and leave them poor. Soil poverty is accentuated by low use of inputs like fertilizers because farmers lack capital with which to purchase them. Population pressure has forced people to cultivate marginal land which is susceptible to soil erosion. Smit (1967) argues that "in Lesotho only areas with a slope of less than 9% (5°) are suitable for cultivation" (p. 25). Other factors identified are untimely rains, periodic droughts, hail, frost and pests which combine to reduce production more. Makhanya (1979) concludes that:

"It was established that the factors that were obviously related to the fluctuation in crop production were the adverse weather conditions, especially the erratic nature of the rainfall with which farmers were unable to cope due to their financial and technological limitations."

(p.124)

No doubt physical conditions imply a high risk for farmers. One official document even refers to soil erosion as "the greatest single problem of agriculture" (FFYDP:1970: 10). However, it is insufficient to attach overriding importance to them without sufficiently taking into account the socio-economic and political conditions of the country.

3.2.3.2. Institutional explanations

Arguments advanced by this category rely heavily on modernisation theory. These writers (Leister, 1966; Cowen, 1967; Williams, 1972; Wallman, 1970) maintain that low agricultural output is caused by the persistence of traditional social institutions and the mentality of the farmers. These factors, they argue, are not conducive to modern farming. Rather, they promote its subsistence orientation.

According to Leister (1966) "what basically impedes the development of a dynamic agricultural economy is the interaction between an archaic form of land tenure, a social system biased against rapid change" (pp. 6-7). Williams (1972) argues that the cause of agricultural underdevelopment is social cultural incongruity made up of irrationality of peasants' sustained belief in magic and superstition. Wallman (1970) sees failure of agriculture as caused by a "poverty syndrome" made up of migration, ideology and poverty. Leister summarises the general conclusion that those who analyse the problem from a modernisation point of view often come to, as "it is the attitudes and practices of the Basotho peasants that have to change if rising outputs and preservation of the soil are to be achieved"(p.10).

3.2.3.3. Politico-economic explanations

Recently, writers such as Palmer & Parsons, (1977); Leys (1979); and Murray (1981), have argued that underdevelopment of agriculture and rural poverty in Lesotho can best be explained in the context of the country's political economy. This implies the need for a historical analysis of ways in which the country was incorporated into the world capitalist system through a progressive undermining of its agricultural base.

The history of agricultural production in Lesotho shows that in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Basotho produced enough surplus for sale to its neighbouring peoples, (Theal quoted in Palmers & Parsons, 1977). The discovery of diamonds in Kimberly in the 1870's and that of gold in the Witwatersrand in 1884 created a high

demand for foodstuff supplies. Basotho took this market opportunity and adopted intensive cultivation methods to produce more surplus for sale. Peasant production boomed so much that the country was renowned as the "Granary of South Africa" (Murray, 1981). Thus the process of commercialization of agriculture was heightened (Sterkenburg, 1980). This boom simultaneously sowed the seeds of destruction of the country's agricultural base. First, labour migration to the mines increased as people sought to buy agricultural implements and firearms. Increased labour migration, therefore, buttressed Lesotho's dependence on South Africa. It also set the basis on which the wages paid in the mines were later to outcompete remuneration from farming, and lead to the consequent neglect of the latter. Secondly, western consumer goods were introduced to the Basotho and made their consumption pattern dependent on imports. Thirdly, production for external markets left the country's economy vulnerable to external market fluctuations. Fourthly, efforts to produce more for the market led to overcultivation of the limited arable land and soil erosion began.

At the beginning of the 20th century the vibrant agricultural economy of Lesotho declined from that of "Granary to labour reserve" (Murray, 1981). Major factors that caused this decline were, first, that the Boers put tariffs on grain imported from Lesotho to the mines in South Africa. This was done to facilitate capitalist farming among the Boers of the Orange Free State by guaranteeing them a monopoly of markets. Secondly, the completion of the railway line between the Rand and the Cape enabled import of cheap grain from America and Australia. Thirdly, eviction of black squatters in South Africa as a result of the 1913 Land Act led to an influx of immigrants to Lesotho. This accentuated the population pressure problem and contributed to increased soil erosion because marginal lands were used for cultivation. Fourthly, natural factors like the rinderpest and drought added to the above politico-economic factors to cripple the agricultural base even more.

The present ecological deterioration and the failure of peasants to produce enough to meet domestic food requirements are therefore symptoms of a highly marginalised society.

3.2.4. An Inventory of Constraints : a Reassessment

Analysts of problems of agricultural development in Lesotho tend to over-emphasize the importance of one factor or another. A re-assessment of these problems, however, suggests that the factors involved are many and intertwined. A comprehensive analysis, therefore, calls for an integrated approach to the problem.

3.2.4.1. Physical factors

Agro-ecological conditions in the country are, to a large extent, not favourable for crop production. Only 13 per cent of the country is arable (SFYDP):1975:1). This is only about 360,000 hectares. This arable land consists mainly of sandy loam soils that are susceptible to erosion. Poor use of fertilizers and continued cultivation of the same poor soils results in low yields. Table 7 below shows overall national fertilizer consumption over time by type of fertilizer.

Table 7: National Fertilizer Consumption 1969/70-1977/78

Year	Volume (tons)	Nutrient elements	
		NPK	H,P205 & K20
1969	2609	262	541
1970	2420	266	532
1971	6026	570	1222
1972	3680	371	769
1973/74	4957	554	1081
1974/75	3865	502	932
1975/76	3835	507	938
1976/77	5937	1139	2015
1977/78	7946	1228	2206

Source: Third Five Year Development Plan:1980:p.164.

Soil erosion is worsened by population pressure and overgrazing. The overall de jure and de facto population densities in 1979 were 43 persons/km² and 37 persons/km² respectively. The de jure and de facto population densities on arable land for the same year, were 427 persons/km² and 373 persons/km² respectively (Annual Statistical Bulletin, 1980, pp. 15 & 18).

Crops are also damaged by periodic droughts, hail, frost and pests. Risks in view of ecological conditions have a negative effect on investment in farming.

3.2.4.2. Farming Methods

Successful farming demands that one must have oxen, plough, planter and capital. Most farmers do not have these requirements and therefore have to hire the services of either oxen from those who have or tractors. Exact costs on hired oxen are not easily available. For tractors, however, it is estimated that in 1972 the cost was between R0.80-R1.00 per Sesotho acre and this cost rose by 25 per cent in 1974 due to the rise in oil prices (Murray, 1981, p. 85). The use of tractors has, however, up to now mostly been limited to affluent farmers because of the high expenses involved. The use of proper inputs like fertilizer and selected seeds is important for successful farming. As shown in Table 7, however, fertilizer consumption is low because it is expensive. Moreover, animal manure is mostly used as fuel rather than in the fields. These factors affect output in that there is a need for a high investment in farming. However, farmers need some incentives by way of returns in order to undertake such investments.

3.2.4.3. Institutional Constraints

Marketing and pricing are institutions that can offer incentives to farmers if they are well organised and managed. No comprehensive study on marketing of agricultural products has yet been undertaken in Lesotho. Yet concern about the inefficiency of this institution and pricing has

been expressed in many circles (cf. ILO-JASPA, 1979; Murray, 1981; TFYDP, 1980; Huisman & Sterkenburg, 1982). The formal marketing agencies, The Produce Marketing Agency (PMC) for farm produce and Livestock Marketing Agency (LMC), have generally been a failure and are now discontinued. Their failure can be attributed to, among other things, inability to offer competitive prices to farmers vis-a-vis the prices offered by the already bad "informal" marketing channels, especially local traders and those across the border in South Africa. Lack of efficient markets and low prices for produce do not encourage farmers to invest in farming because it is not profitable. This reluctance becomes even more because of high risks involved in farming and the possibility of earning a living from migrant labour.

Communal land tenure has also been blamed as an institutional constraint to farm output because it encourages overstocking, subsistence production and offers no security of tenure to farmers.

3.2.4.4. Politico-economic constraints

Migration to the mines in the Republic of South Africa leads to a general neglect of farming in Lesotho according to many authors (ILO-JASPA, 1979; Murray 1981; Van der Wiel, 1977; Wykstra, 1978 etc.). Wykstra, for instance, argues that the absence of about 60 per cent of the able bodied manpower from the country throughout the year leads to shortage of labour at critical periods during the farming cycle. He uses production figures between 1950 and 1976 and compares them with migration figures over the same period to argue that there was a production decrease because of shortage of adequate manpower in agriculture.

It is generally agreed by all writers that the rural population prefers migration to farming because the former is more profitable than the latter. This relative profitability has increased since the early seventies due to a rise in wages in the mines in the Republic of South

Africa. Van der Wiel (1977) argues that an improved land using fertilizers and improved seed produces an average yield worth R160.00 for cash crops per annum. This figure contrasts with the possibility of earning an average of R1260.00 per annum in the mines in South Africa. These wages in the mines have been described as a several fold of that which can be expected from farming at home (SFYDP, 1979). At present remittances from migrant workers do not supplement agriculture but it is agriculture that supplements them. In 1976 migrant remittances accounted for about seventy per cent of the total rural household's income while agriculture only contributed seventeen per cent (Van der Wiel, 1977; p.88).

It can be concluded, therefore, that risks in view of vulnerable ecological conditions, the need for high capital investments, poor marketing and pricing that do not reflect farming production costs combined to make farming less attractive to invest in as a full-time source of income compared to the alternative of migrant work. This situation has led to a relative neglect of farming and resulted in low output.

3.2.5. Agricultural Development Policy

Agricultural policy in Lesotho has over the years been based on a demonstration approach and partial improvements. A handful of progressive farmers have often been selected, and given financial and technical support. The assumption was that their progress would demonstrate to the rest of the farmers the importance of using modern farming techniques, so that the latter would follow suit. The Area-based projects were used as the strategy to effect the policy (Moody, 1972). These were Khomokhoana, Thaba-Bosiu, Senqu and Thaba-Tseka. The first three were in the lowlands and emphasized a crop production component. The Thaba-Tseka project is concerned with livestock and is located in the mountains. Farmers covered by these projects were given financial assistance, extension services and were taught modern farming techniques. High production targets were often set and new cash crops like asparagus, for instance, introduced.

These projects, except Thaba-Tseka, have generally failed and been discontinued. Firstly, their impact on agriculture was limited because they were spatially confined to areas they covered. There was no trickle-down effects to the rest of the farmers as had been anticipated. Secondly, They were too large and suffered from conflicting objectives. Thirdly, they were more concerned with output but failed to improve other services necessary to ensure improved output. Such services were marketing, pricing and provision of adequate infrastructure for distribution. Fourthly, they emphasized capital intensive farming techniques which farmers could not afford. Fifthly, they were conceived from the top and thus failed to involve the farmers at the local level. Sixthly, the projects relied heavily on foreign capital and expatriate personnel without adequate attempts to explore possibilities of using local resources. As a result, when the foreign assistance ceased, the projects collapsed.

Dissatisfaction with the area-based projects led to the adoption of a new agricultural policy. This new policy emphasized provision of basic services for farming; hence its name Basic Agricultural Services Project (BASP) which was implemented in 1979. The effect of BASP on farming had still not been seen when it got discontinued, hardly three or four years within its implementation. A tentative assessment of BASP, however, showed that it was bound to fail (Matanda, 1981). This feeling was caused by the fact that, like area-based projects, BASP was still a top-down programme that failed to involve farmers at local level. Secondly, it still lacked measures to remedy marketing and pricing problems. Thirdly, there was still a high foreign capital content involved in it. Fourthly, it still advocated use of capital intensive farming techniques which a majority of farmers could not afford.

At present, the government has embarked on a so-called Food Self-Sufficiency Programme. Information on this programme is difficult to get at present.

It can only be concluded that agricultural development

policy in Lesotho has been far from continuous over the years. It is this lack of continuity; attempts to introduce partial modifications through the introduction of farming techniques without corresponding institutional adjustments like marketing; and continued failure to solicit at grassroot level adequate farmers' input(s) towards formulation of agricultural related policies and programmes, that have frustrated government intervention in the agricultural sector.

3.3. The Land Tenure System and Agricultural Development: A re-assessment of Relationships

The influence of the land tenure system in Lesotho on agricultural development has been expressed in many publications (cf. Sheddick, 1954; Bentsi-Enchill, 1963; Cowen, 1967; Williams, 1972; Makhanya, 1979; Eckert, 1980; ILO-JASPA, 1979; World Bank, 1975; FFYDP, 1970; SFYDP, 1975). Analysis of these various publications, reports and official documents shows that there is general feeling that customary land tenure is responsible for low agricultural output in the country. Eckert (1980) has summarised the main arguments levelled against the land tenure system as follows:

- it does not provide farmers with security of tenure
- it encourages subsistence farming
- it fails to provide security for credit
- it causes fragmentation
- it results in misallocation of resources.

There is also agreement among all that a change in the land tenure system is necessary if attempts to improve agriculture are to be successful. There is, however, disagreement on the exact nature of change desirable. Williams (1972), for instance, advocates absolute freehold tenure. Cowen (1967) recommends partial modifications to enable introduction of leases. Makhanya (1979) argues that changes introduced must enable farmers to consolidate holdings and own them on co-operative basis at village level. ILO-JASPA (1979) fails to say what must be done, except to vaguely mention that changes that will enable farmers to be more responsive to agriculture are necessary. A reassessment of relationships between the land tenure system and agriculture in the light of these views expressed is attempted below.

3.3.1. Security of tenure?

The greatest criticism levelled against the customary land tenure system is that it did not provide enough security for farmers to make long term investments in farming. Williams (1972), for instance, argues that because farmers felt insecure they were reluctant to invest time or capital to improve the land, or adopt modern farming techniques. Insecurity of tenure was said to arise because the chief had the right to revoke land if during an inspection he found that a person had more than his subsistence requirements. Critics also point out that chiefs sometimes misused this right and took away fertile fields from their owners and allocated them to friends or to themselves.

It must be realized, however, that chiefs did not make a unilateral decision to revoke land. They exercised this right within a stipulated socio-economic and political framework. Society had given them the responsibility to ensure equitable distribution of the scarce resource, land, on its behalf. Therefore revocation of fields in excess of subsistence requirements was just an instrument to realize equity. Contrary to the view that the term "subsistence requirements" is vague (cf. Bentsi-Enchill et al, 1963), it was clearly stipulated that subsistence requirements of a family were measured by the number of its dependents. It was, therefore, related to the household developmental cycle. Moreover, land allocation committees or village development committees with which the chief worked in close consultation, were meant to ensure impartiality in land related matters.

Insecurity of tenure is also said to arise because of the somewhat self-contradictory aspects of inheritance. On the one hand, it is argued that litigation over inheritance rights of land discouraged long term investments; while on the other hand the fact that land was not inheritable "mobu hase lefa" discouraged long term investments for fear that such land improvements could be enjoyed by other people who might be re-allocated the land after the death of the parent owners. In practice, however, land remained under

use by the same family for generations because of first preference given to the sons of the deceased when fields were re-allocated. Moreover, parents usually stepped down some of their fields for their newly married sons and asked the chief to confirm use rights on them.

There seems to have been enough security of tenure under the system for farmers to invest in agriculture.

3.3.2. A Subsistence Orientation?

The fact that fields which exceeded subsistence requirements had to be taken away has been blamed for encouraging production for subsistence rather than for the market. It is argued that farmers feared that if they produced surplus they would be thought to have more fields than their family requirements and would, therefore, lose them. According to ILO-JASPA (1979):

"Under these circumstances the farmer who does not want to part with land has the motive of ensuring that land productivity is not so high that it results in any question as to whether or not he should keep his whole land allocation."

(p.125)

This allegation is not correct. Farmers were not prohibited from producing surplus. Basotho farmers used to produce surplus for the market in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. So large was the surplus produce for export that the country was renowned as the granary of South Africa. Farmers invested to produce surplus then because there existed a good market and prices for their produce in the mines in South Africa. Fields of those who produced surplus then were never taken away. Even today there are still a few progressive farmers who produce surplus. Their fields have never been taken away.

It has been argued that the equity dimension of the land tenure system did not allow for an emergence of a class of capitalist farmers who would practise modern farming and boost productivity (cf. Williams, 1972). However, this argument overlooks the fact that it is not

the existence of a class of capitalist farmers per se that increases productivity. Rather, incentives have to be built into the production structure if productivity is to increase. Even capitalist farmers cannot produce for the market if marketing channels are inefficient and prices not consistent with production costs. In Lesotho, it is doubtful if formation of capitalist farmers would solve the problem of low output unless marketing and pricing were improved. This would appear to be one of the reasons why efforts to create this class through policies that encourage progressive farmers since 1958 up to today, have failed.

3.3.3. Credit

According to traditional law land could not be transferred or used for monetary transactions in Lesotho. Critics point out that land could not be used as collateral for agricultural credit with which to purchase inputs. Lack of proper farm inputs resulted in low yields. According to Mosaase (1982):

"Funds from a Credit Union and agricultural bank were lying idle because there were very few 'safe' borrowers from the agricultural sector" (p.3)

The use of farm inputs is indeed low in the country. However, to blame this low use on the failure of the land to be used to secure credit is doubtful. First the argument pre-supposes a shortage of capital in the rural areas. It is doubtful, however, whether all the possibilities of raising finance within the rural sector in Lesotho have been explored. A majority of the rural labour force in the country work as migrants in the mines in South Africa where they get rather substantial wages. The problem is that at present there are no incentives to encourage them to invest these wages in farming. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century wages from migrant labour were invested in farming because then there were good markets and prices for agricultural produce.

Today because of poor markets and prices, these wages are invested in consumer goods and livestock, mainly bought from the Republic of South Africa. These imports have increased several fold during the seventies because of a rise in mining wages. Table 8 below shows a rise in imported livestock by type over time.

Table 8: Imports of Livestock 1950-1978

(Year)	Cattle	Horses	Mules	Donkeys	Sheep	Goats
1950 .	13,626	3,887	45	255	1,296	9
1960	19,527	4,577	75	190	4,324	309
1970	4,730	1,768	25	173	12,416	446
1971	6,869	2,748	26	93	16,194	59
1972	5,028	2,515	26	182	6,202	124
1973	4,067	1,798	13	212	3,313	378
1974	3,046	475	-	27	3,068	137
1975	31,756	1,636	3	113	6,152	213
1976	33,821	1,980	2	104	9,134	102
1977	47,673	2,153	5	288	17,519	179
1978	57,787	1,813	-	310	36,138	223

Source: Third Five Year Development Plan, 1980, p.172.

From Table 8 above it can be argued that the extra wages were invested in livestock, especially cattle, as shown by a sharp increase in their import around the mid-seventies, because the risks and costs incurred in livestock production are less than those incurred in crop production.

In the second place, it is incorrect to argue that agricultural credit could not be extended to farmers because land could not be used as security. The memorandum of the Lesotho Agricultural Development Bank (LADB) (1979) clearly states that no credit can be extended to individual farmers unless they are members of a recognized cooperative. In this way the security of the credit, in case of default, is held by the cooperative as a whole.

4.3.5. Misallocation of land resources?

The practice that in winter land be used for communal grazing has been accused of misallocating resources. This is so because land can only be used during one season of the year. This discourages cultivation of winter cash crops. It can only be noted that the land tenure system was flexible enough to adapt to introduction of winter crops. For a long time now, wheat and peas have been grown by Basotho farmers. Therefore, people are free to cultivate their fields in winter if they want to do so. Today, it is not unusual anymore that farmers should cut the stalks of their crops after harvest and stockpile them for winter feed. Critics further argue that the idea that fields that were not used for cultivation be revoked, made farmers do token cultivation just to be able to maintain them. It must be realized, however, that it was very rare that fields were taken away if they were not cultivated. The high rate of fallow land (30% of arable land) reported (IBRD, 1981) between the years 1973/74 and 1977/78 bears testimony to this aspect. Substandard farming occurs because of various reasons like weather hazards, inadequate use of inputs and lack of sufficient incentives to attract the limited capital available to be invested in farming.

Conclusion

Agriculture is the main domestic source of employment and income for the rural population in Lesotho but the agricultural output is very low. This low level can be illustrated by the fact that the country imports about half of its domestic food requirements. These imports primarily come from neighbouring South Africa. A number of factors have been identified as causes of low output in Lesotho. These factors are:

- a) harsh agro-ecological conditions like poor soils, soil erosion, periodic droughts, frost and pests;
- b) poor farming methods like mono-cropping, inadequate use of fertilizers and manure and untimely ploughing due to lack of oxen and high costs involved in employing tractors;
- c) institutional constraints like the lack of efficient marketing and pricing, poor extension services, overgrazing and the land tenure, and
- d) politico-economic factors such as migrant labour and irrelevant government agricultural development policies.

Increasing concern has been expressed over time about the negative effect that customary land tenure system had on agricultural performance in the country.

Those who blame the land tenure system argue that it

- did not provide farmers with security of tenure;
- encouraged production for subsistence;
- failed to provide for land to be used as collateral for agricultural credit;
- resulted in fragmentation and misallocation of resources.

It is argued in this report that, the contention that customary land tenure in Lesotho did not provide farmers with security of tenure is based upon a wrong

assumption. It also errs because it is based on an insufficient understanding of the socio-economic and political context within which the land tenure system operated. This misunderstanding leads those who blame the land tenure system to draw conclusions based on an inadequate appreciation of the difference between formal regulations and the actual practice in land matters. Assessment of the main aspects which are alleged to cause insecurity of tenure, namely the possibility that farmers can be deprived of their fields at any time by the chiefs and that land cannot be inherited, shows that the alleged effects of these aspects on farmers is over-emphasized. In actual practice, it was very rare that farmers were deprived of their fields. Fields remained under use by the same families for generations. Due to these aspects it cannot be argued that there is low output in agriculture because farmers feel too insecure to invest in their land.

With regard to the claim that the customary land tenure system had a subsistence orientation, it is brought forward that this was not necessarily so. The attempt to give rural households a relatively equal access to land was based on recognition of the fact that farming is the main domestic activity from which income can be derived. The land tenure system therefore attempted to ensure an equitable distribution of income among rural households by giving them a relatively equal access to land, the main domestic source of employment. The argument that some households do not cultivate their land efficiently because they are not keen on farming is not correct. Households fail to cultivate their fields mainly because they do not have enough working capital by way of liquid cash and technology - oxen, tractors, ploughs, planter and fertilizers - and due to other factors like lack of rains at the right time in the ploughing season. Furthermore, the land tenure system did not prevent any farmer from producing surplus. Basotho farmers used to produce surplus for the market in the mid-19th century to the

early 20th century. Even to-day a few 'progressive' farmers still produce surplus. The fields used by those who produce surplus were not taken away from them because they were thought to be producing beyond their subsistence requirements. It is, therefore, not correct to conclude that there is low output because farmers hesitated to produce surplus lest their fields be taken away from them.

The argument that the land tenure system failed to allow for land to be used as collateral for agricultural credit in Lesotho is rather irrelevant. The memorandum of the Lesotho Agricultural Development Bank clearly states that agricultural loans can only be given to cooperatives and not individual farmers. Since there is no indication that the land tenure system did not allow farmers to form cooperatives in order to be able to get loans, the argument is thus not valid. Moreover, in the case of Lesotho, there are other sources of finance that can be exploited for agricultural development purposes without the need for land to be used as collateral. Remittances from migrant workers could, for instance, be used for investments in farming. In order for this investment to take place, incentives have to be introduced in farming. In other words, farming must be made more profitable than it is at present. Obviously, the returns to investments in farming must be higher than the risks of loss. This implies that efficient marketing opportunities and good prices for agricultural produce must be introduced. At present remittances from migrant workers are mainly used to purchase consumer goods and livestock. The imported livestock is of a poor quality and only helps to aggravate the already serious problem of over-grazing. In the case of Lesotho, therefore, it is inappropriate to argue that the land tenure system did not enhance agricultural credit, therefore there was low output..

Critics of customary land tenure in Lesotho often recommend that the land tenure system must be changed

in favour of a more individualised tenure - either absolute freehold system or introduction of land 'leases'. This recommendation is based on the assumption that introduction of a more individualised land tenure will facilitate the more enterprising farmers to acquire more land and produce surplus for the market. Furthermore, land will have a market value and be used in monetary transactions especially as a mortgage for agricultural credit. The expectation is that these two aspects will lead to output growth and thus agricultural development. It has to be realized, however, that introduction of an individualized land tenure - be it freehold or leases - might have more destructive effects than constructive ones.

Firstly, in order for land to have a market value a number of factors have to be considered. Such factors may be, for instance, the quality of land, size, its proximity to urban centres and other nuclei in the rural areas and its nearness to infrastructural networks like transport routes with regard to its accessibility. All these factors will determine the demand for various land(s). In the case of Lesotho most agricultural land is poor, small and its accessibility relatively difficult by modern means of transport. It is doubtful whether land of this nature can be effectively used as mortgage for monetary transactions.

Secondly, it must be realized that an increase in output does not necessarily mean development. In other words, a growth without equity in the agricultural sector is not agricultural development. The emergence of a class of capitalist farmers usually takes place at the expense of the majority of poor farmers. The failure of poor farmers to mobilise enough capital in their farming activities leads them to fail to compete successfully in the emergent capitalist agriculture. They are therefore often forced to give up their land to the few farmers who have capital viability. The labour so displaced from agriculture must, however, have

alternative domestic employment opportunities. In this way, the latter can also be able to reap the fruits of increased agricultural output, because they will have the money with which to purchase food. In Lesotho, such alternative off-farm employment opportunities hardly exist at present and the prospect of their existence in the future is not very promising. Over the years, Basotho have had off-farm employment as migrant labourers in South Africa. However, since the seventies it has become increasingly clear that these opportunities are decreasing. This is so because South Africa is increasingly mechanising its mining operations and has increased wages in the mines in order to attract cheap labour from its Bantustans to reduce its heavy reliance on labour from its independent neighbours (Gray et al, 1980; Eckert & Wykstra, 1979; Huisman, H., 1983).

Introduction of freehold tenure or even 'leases' therefore will mean that the majority of the rural population will not be able to get employment either in agriculture or migrant labour as before, and will be virtually unemployed. This implies that whatever output growth might be achieved in agriculture through the introduction of either freehold or leasehold tenure will not be accompanied by a corresponding re-distribution of the benefits. The rich might become richer and the poor even poorer. Should this happen in Lesotho, then agricultural development will not have been achieved because not all of its main objectives - increased output, creation of more employment in agriculture and an improved standard of living for the majority of the population - will have been achieved.

A further point to be noted is that even a class of the so-called capitalist farmers cannot produce for the market unless the markets are efficient and prices offered for their produce attractive. It has been argued in this report that inefficient markets and low prices for agricultural produce in Lesotho make farming relatively

unattractive because of low returns, yet production risks are high. It can, therefore, be doubted whether even if a class of capitalist farmers emerges, it will be willing to produce for the market when the marketing structure is poor and prices low. It would possibly appear that these farmers might tend to use accumulated land(s) more for speculation than production.

In conclusion, therefore, it should be realised that there are more important factors that act as constraints to agricultural development in Lesotho than the land tenure system. These factors are harsh agro-ecological conditions that make crop production risky; the use of poor farming methods due to lack of available relevant information, and lack of working capital; inefficient marketing and low prices and farm produce. All these factors make farming risky and rather unattractive to invest in. This unattractiveness is accentuated by the opportunity to earn better incomes through migrant labour in the Republic of South Africa. Migration has over time led to a relative neglect of agriculture and this neglect has increased with the rise in wages offered in the mines of the Republic since the middle seventies.

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