



Agricultural Policy Research in Africa



SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL? POLICY CHOICES AND OUTCOMES FOR AGRARIAN CHANGE FOR RESETTLED FARMERS IN MVURWI DISTRICT

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Working Paper

WP|36
July 2020

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



The authors wish to acknowledge the support received from the Agricultural Policy Research in Africa (APRA) Futures Agriculture Consortium. APRA is a five-year research programme that works across three streams in six countries, investigating pathways to agricultural commercialisation, including Zimbabwe. The paper is based on fieldwork and archival research carried out in Zimbabwe. The authors also wish to acknowledge fieldwork support from Simbai Msikinye, Norman Aniva, Vincent Sarai, Tauya Zengeya, Athanas Chimombe, Vimbai Princess Gabriella Charwadza, and Selina Semende. Finally, we wish to thank over 370 farmers whom we interacted with during data collection, including interviews.

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This research was conducted with funding from UK aid of the UK government. The findings and conclusions contained are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect positions or policies of the UK government or the Department for International Development (DFID).

ACRONYMS

APRA	Agricultural Policy Research in Africa
BSAC	British South Africa Company
CA	command agriculture
FTLRP	Fast-Track Land Reform Programme
GNU	government of national unity
GoZ	Government of Zimbabwe
ha	hectare
IR	inverse relationship
ISP	input-subsidy programme
LSCF	large-scale commercial farm
MAMID	Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanisation, and Irrigation Development
ORA	old resettlement area
RBZ	Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe
SAP	structural adjustment programme
SSCF	small-scale commercial farm
TFP	total factor productivity
TIMB	Tobacco Industry Marketing Board
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front

ABSTRACT



This paper delves into the age-old debate on the efficacy and capacity of the 'small farm' versus the 'large farm' in terms of meeting household and national food self-sufficiency and contributing to the attainment of rural livelihoods outcomes. After the fast-track land reform programme (FTLRP), Zimbabwe has witnessed the prominence of two farming models, the small A1 and the large A2 model, whose distinction is primarily based on farm size. But what are the implications of farm size on production and broad development outcomes? Based on emerging evidence from Mvurwi, there are indications that on average the 'small' farmers have higher land utilisation rates as compared to their 'large' counterparts. Interestingly, amongst the small farmers are a thriving group who, based on type of farming activity and the output thereof, are outdoing their larger counterparts.

The paper notes that, while various government input-subsidy programmes were designed for both small and large farmers post-fast-track land reform, the latter have tended to be the main beneficiaries of aid production on a commercial scale, and in the process, raising real prospects for accumulation and immediate household economic gains. Small farmers have also received government support but more on a welfare basis. However, banking on various alternative sources of financing to support commercial production, small farmers are an early indication of the agency of the 'small' farmer and the 'small' farm option of meeting the goals of food security and 'introverted accumulation' and development. Small farmers may also have better production resilience, especially in the context of a constrained macro-economy, as well as emergent challenges such as climate change and reconfigured labour relations in the wake of land reform. The paper concludes that broad economic and development policy choices and outcomes, especially as they pertain to resettled farmers, may continue to be missed for as long as agricultural production-support interventions do not seriously consider the small farmer and the small farm model.

Keywords: small farms; input-subsidy programmes; inverse relationship; food security; agricultural commercialisation.

INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe's Fast-Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) of 2000 resulted in changed agrarian relations and an agrarian structure dominated by two farming schemes, the small A1 scheme and the larger A2 farm scheme (Moyo 2011b; Scoones *et al.* 2012).² The decline in levels of production on the former white commercial farms post-FTLRP has probably emerged as the most topical in discussions on land reform (Sachikonye 2003), with the FTLRP widely seen as having coincided with both a decline in agricultural production and a general macroeconomic paralysis that has persisted to this day. While debate on the probity of the process of land reform also continues, it can be argued that agriculture has to date suffered from under-capitalisation when compared to the pre-2000 era. Yet the success of agriculture in both colonial and post-colonial periods has always depended on extensive financing from a wide variety of sources, including both government and the private sector (Matondi 2012: 161). The same has extensively been argued for the preceding periods under colonial rule stretching as far back as the 1890s (Selby 2006; Mbangwa 1991; Arrighi 1967).

As the drying up of agriculture financing became an obvious and glaring reality of the post-FTLRP, the government has, since the early 2000s, been at the forefront in trying to plug this agriculture financing gap (Mazwi *et al.* 2019; Matondi 2012: 148). While the neoliberal moment of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) in the late 1980s and 1990s had severely limited direct government funding for agriculture, Zimbabwe post-2000 perhaps stands out in terms of government support for agriculture through input-subsidy programmes (ISPs) that have been initiated concurrent in the post-land reform period. A similar and more recent trend has been noted across Africa with the adoption of ISPs by governments, especially in the wake of the 2003 Maputo Declaration on agriculture spending by African governments (Jayne *et al.* 2018: 1).

However, most such government-initiated ISPs have tended to have a bias towards the large-scale farm model, and in the process largely excluding the small farmers who ironically drive the bulk of Africa's agriculture. Moreover, as recent evidence from Mvurwi seems to suggest, this approach to

ISPs, also followed by the Zimbabwean government, is failing to tap into the productivity potential of the 'small farm' model and the agency of the smallholder farmer. It also totally ignores such emerging evidence that seems to confirm the long-held existence of an inverse relationship (IR) between farm size and productivity. This is particularly in regard to ensuring that ISPs meet the goals of food self-sufficiency, firstly at the household level and eventually the national, while aiding the accumulation prospects of the farmers.

The debate focuses on two contrasting perspectives, based on the two farm size models. The first is the view that small farms are more efficient on account of their efficiency, productivity, and low labour costs (Griffin, Rahman Khan and Ickowitz 2002). The second, quite in contrast with the earlier is that large farms are preferable given their ability to utilise economies of scale (Gautam 2015). The policy choice in support of Zimbabwe's emerging agrarian structure is perceived to be derived from this debate.

While the story of Zimbabwe's agriculture post-2000 is polarised (Moyo 2011a), for some like Robertson (2011), there is the usual tendency to blanket it as an example of failed land reform, typified by a decline in agricultural outputs and loss of formal employment. One easily gets the impression of homogenous failure among all land reform beneficiaries, an impression which is, however, far from the truth. Based on different sources of financing for agriculture, there are as many success stories as there are those of failure across the two (A1 and A2) resettlement scheme types.

As Scoones *et al.* (2012) note, the production and resulting livelihoods picture after land reform is far from homogenous, with notable differentiation on the different farms and across the various schemes. The post-land reform setting perhaps presents an apt opportunity to revisit the small/large farm debate, in providing a nuanced assessment of the different desired outcomes and the reality. This paper asks: how have policy choices for ISPs influenced productivity across farming scales and with what productivity and accumulation outcomes? How have small and larger farms performed since the resettlement programme?

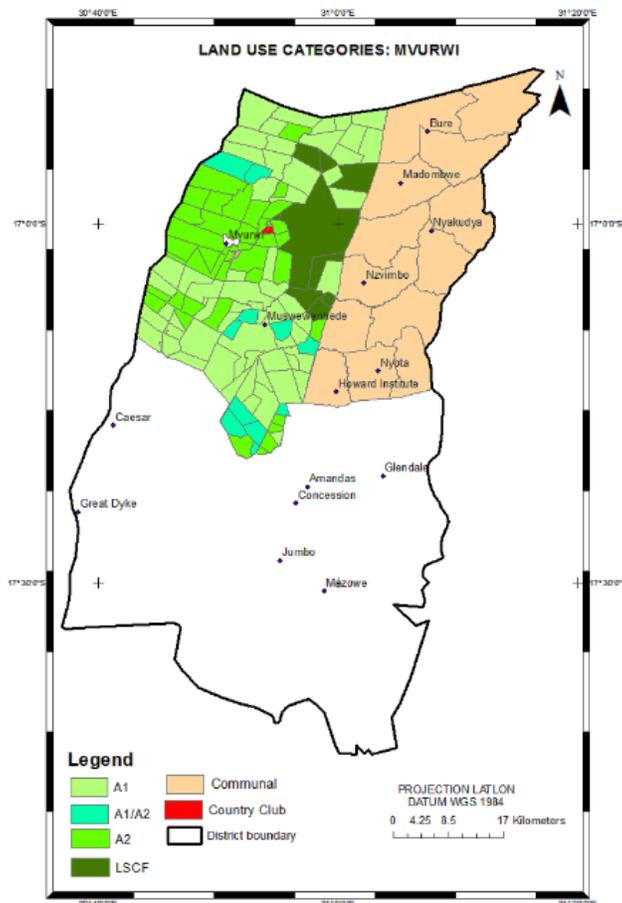
Based on a recent study of the Mvurwi farming area in Mazowe District, Zimbabwe, this paper makes a preliminary exploration of the implications of farm size on the production outcomes for the small (A1) and larger (A2) farmers. This is assessed within the context of the persistent presence of state-led ISPs on the post-2000 farms towards realising the sought outcomes of land reform. With a setting where both farm typologies exist side by side, the Mvurwi case study presents an opportunity to test how farmers on the different farm schemes are faring.

The paper assesses the two farm typologies on a number of outcomes including land utilisation and production, inputs sourcing, crop choice and marketing, labour, and mechanisation, as well as accumulation as measured through asset endowment. The paper is based on structured household surveys of 40 A2 (medium-scale farmers) and 310 A1 (villagised) small-scale farmers. These were followed up with 20 in-depth interviews selected purposively, and drawn from an equal number between the two farm models from the Mvurwi farming area, 100km north of Harare. Mvurwi falls under the agro-ecological region II, which receives above 700mm of rainfall annually. As shown in

Figure 1.1, the area experienced extensive resettlement under the FTLRP.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: following this introduction, Section 2 discusses the conceptual framework on small and large farms. Section 3 presents a historical perspective on state intervention and agricultural production before and after independence in Zimbabwe. Section 4 presents emerging evidence on production and accumulation, crop choice, farm mechanisation, diversification, and marketing, as well as labour-hiring dynamics. Section 5 discusses the key findings. Section 6 concludes the article.

Figure 1.1 Map for Mvurwi farming area in Mazowe District



Source: Shonhe (2018).

2 CONCEPTUALISING THE 'SMALL FARM' VS 'LARGE FARM'

What distinguishes a 'small' from a 'large' farm? These terms are generally perceived as 'somewhat imprecise' as variations exist among the smallholders (Cousins 2013: 117) and are identified differently by both stakeholders and scholars. Jayne *et al.* (2003) consider the smallholder farmer as having 6 hectares (ha) or less, their distinction being based on size. In post-FTLRP Zimbabwe, smallholder farmers (encompassing communal areas, old resettlements, and the villagised post-2000 A1) on average hold 20ha (roughly 6ha are arable and about 14ha are included as common grazing land (Moyo 2011b: 942)). The large farm, on the other hand, comprises middle-sized and large-scale capitalist farms, with an average landholding of 142ha and 844ha respectively (Moyo 2011b: 942).³

Moyo (2011b: 944), however, argues that Zimbabwe's agrarian structure goes beyond differences in land size, and encompass other considerations including forms of land tenure, the social status of landholders, and the capacity to hire labour. Griffin, Rahman Khan and Ickowitz (2004: 369) also make the distinction based on the differential application of labour. In this paper, we define 'small farms' as those tilling less than 6ha and 'large farms' as those tilling more than 6ha of land. As will be noted in this paper, this distinction corresponds to the emerging distinction between A1 and A2 farmers resettled under the FTLRP.

Yet the 'farm size–production' relationship retains important implications for public policy (Rada and Fuglie 2019). Two contrasting perspectives, making a case for either the small or the large farm, continue to divide scholars, agricultural and development economists, and practitioners alike. The first, in support of the small-farm paradigm, is based on postulations on the existence of an inverse relationship (IR) between farm size and productivity. This concludes with the prevalence of the tendency that on average, small-sized farms are more productive than large farms (Julien *et al.* 2019: 153; Rada and Fuglie 2019; Griffin *et al.* 2002, 2004). The second and contrasting paradigm argues for large farms, based mainly on their better suitability to leverage on economies of scale (Gautam 2015). Many reasons have been given to explain the existence of the IR including the mediation of (family) labour and better resource use efficiency

(Ali and Deininger 2015: 317), decision-making and its impact on effective resource allocation (Kang'ethe and Serima, 2014: 178), imperfect labour markets (Paul and Wa Githinji 2018: 760), and the role of relative prices and access to resources (Griffin *et al.* 2004: 367).

Measuring the IR has largely relied on yield measures per unit of land (output/land), which has been criticised for not taking into account all factors influencing production. To overcome the shortcomings of this single-factor productivity approach, it is now common to use total factor productivity (TFP) as a comparative performance indicator (Julien, Bravo-Ureta and Rada 2019: 155). This factors in a number of key drivers likely to affect productivity all at once. The overall implication of the IR simply put is that a smallholder farmer with 6ha is more likely to produce more output per hectare of their land as compared to a middle or large farmer with say 50 or 100ha. With less hectares to superintend over, resource allocation and use efficiency is likely better achieved when working over a small piece of land as compared to a large one.

In the wake of a massive redistribution of land since independence and more notably with the FTLRP, there has been a rise in the number of smallholder farmers, in addition to those already existing in the communal areas at the end of the colonial era. Zimbabwe's two major land reform epochs have both had an inclination towards smallholder resettlement involving the breaking down of large estates or single-farm entities into numerous small-sized plots (Lebert 2006). The link between access to land, levels of incomes, and rural poverty has been well documented by various scholars (Todaro and Smith 2009; Griffin *et al.* 2002, 2004; Mbaya 2001). The multiplier effects associated with a wider distribution of assets such as land have been shown to be higher as compared to more concentrated land distribution patterns (Jayne *et al.* 2003: 255). Where better access to land is buttressed with improved productivity through ISPs, the benefits to those in the lower strata of income bracket are potentially enormous and more tangible for them. Land policy and practice can therefore not afford to continue ignoring the potential that lies in the smallholder farm sector in terms of meeting the various development outcomes inherently tied to the agriculture sector.

3 STATE INTERVENTION AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN ZIMBABWE: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Historically, the political economy and sustenance of agricultural production in Zimbabwe pre- and post-independence has relied heavily on both public and private financing (Shumba 2018; Matondi 2012). The development of Rhodesia's agriculture involved the active participation initially of the British South Africa Company (BSAC) and later the Rhodesian state (Palmer 1977; Shonhe 2017: 86). The colonial state centred their development paradigm on the establishment and perpetuation of a dual economy, which persisted well beyond independence (Matondi 2012: 54). The Africans that had been dispossessed of their land progressively from the 1890s were left largely land-short, providing a labour reserve from the communal areas for the large-scale commercial farms (LSCFs) (Chambati 2013: 190).

State measures to support European settler agriculture were also espoused in various statutory frameworks including the Land Apportionment Act of 1941 and the Land Settlement Act of 1944 (Dunlop 1971), concurrently undercutting the productivity and competitiveness of the indigenous black agricultural activities (Shumba 2018: 60). As Shonhe (2018: 9) notes, Rhodesia's agricultural transformation agenda from the 1960s onwards 'favoured large-scale estates, largely owned by South African and British agribusiness corporations as new estate investments by white commercial farmers'.

State intervention in the agriculture sector also came through better funding and markets for both food and cash crops for the white farmers, while African producers were concurrently undermined through the imposition of taxes, rates, and unfair commodity prices (Ranger 1978; Palmer 1977; Phimister 1977). Various credit schemes and support especially through the Land Bank and the Agricultural Finance Corporation were made available for (European) commercial farming (Shonhe 2018) as compared to black farmers by the end of the Second World War (Stoneman 1981).

After independence, the white agrarian class continued to tap selective incentives from the state, including preferential access to foreign currency, and enjoyed cordial relations with the new ruling class, which was not keen to upset this powerful economic group (Shumba 2018: 67). This also included continued support from both domestic and international private capital as well

as access to global commodity circuits. With the willing seller/willing buyer paradigm dictating the pace of land reform in the early years of independence, the newly resettled (black) farmers, the majority of whom were the 'small farm' model, remained largely subsistence-oriented (Hanlon, Manjengwa and Smart 2012; Drinkwater 1991; Alexander 1994).

However, even though with less state support than their large counterparts, the smallholder farmers recorded gains in productivity. According to Rohrbach (1989: 2), Zimbabwe's cereal production grew by about 80 per cent between 1979 and 1985, largely driven by production gains among the smallholder farmers. The decline in the state's role and funding to the 1980s land reform beneficiaries over time (Lahiff 2003) was partly due to the 'free market' recommendations from the Bretton Woods institutions in the 1990s following the introduction of SAPs (Moyo 2005). The promotion of large-scale export-oriented farming came with new forms of financing and marketing of agricultural commodities (Moyo, 2005: 194), in which the small farmers did not participate. In effect, the SAPs period saw a reversal of earlier production gains among the small (peasant) farmers leading to a decline in maize yield in the 1990s (Moyo 2011b: 942).

3.1 ISPs and agricultural production after fast-track land reform

The drying up of international finance lines after 2000 prompted the government to move in to salvage the production situation on the farms – in one swoop exerting political control over the process (Moore 2001), while at the same time coming out as the 'champion' of the land transfer programme (Matondi 2012). Government, at times through the central bank, instituted various support schemes, which were in essence input-subsidy programmes to catalyse production and bolster its support among the land beneficiaries (Mazwi *et al.* 2019; Shonhe 2018; Murisa and Mujeyi 2015). As the central bank then admitted, it had to undertake quasi-fiscal activities to avoid an economic meltdown (RBZ 2008).

The coming in of the government of national unity (GNU) between 2009 and 2013 somewhat stabilised

the economy and the agriculture sector, achieved by the opening up of the commodity markets through the liberalisation of the economy (Shonhe 2017: 200). This had the effect of improving the marketing options for households. At the same time, Zanu-PF as a party adopted various input support schemes that targeted the A1, A2, old resettlement, and communal area farmers, a move which was widely perceived to have vote-buying connotations (Shumba 2018: 70). Some such support schemes exist to this day, running concurrent with new ones such as the Command Agriculture Scheme from 2016/17.

In Zimbabwe, the majority of ISPs initiated by the government after fast-track have been of two general strands, generally differentiating between and targeting the smallholder and the small and medium commercial farms. A commercial thrust has been exerted in support of the small- to medium-scale commercial farmers (generally those resettled under the A2 model) and a more subsistence or welfare approach targeting the smaller farmers (communal areas, old resettlement, and fast-track A1). The majority of these state-led ISPs have tended to have a bias towards the larger farmers, with a supposed focus on the most productive farmers (Mazwi *et al.* 2019). Some existing state-led ISPs such as the Presidential Well-Wishers Special Agricultural Inputs Scheme which started in 2010 are implemented on a welfare basis with a primary target of ensuring only household food security (*ibid.*). A more long-term analysis of state-support programmes for agriculture since the early 2000s is suggestive of discriminatory treatment of small farmers when compared to large farmers. The resulting production-support differentiation framework forms the basis and perpetuation of the dual economy paradigm (Matondi 2012; Fontein 2009) that existed before 2000.

Much of the government's support for agriculture, especially prior to 2008, came in the form of what were quasi-fiscal arrangements by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) (RBZ 2008). For example, on 11 July 2007, the RBZ launched a five-phased Farm Mechanisation Programme, which aimed to mechanise both 'communal and commercial' farmers (RBZ 2008: 4). Phase I of the programme equipped A2 farmers with an assortment of mechanisation equipment including tractors, combine harvesters, ploughs, harrows, planters, and boom sprayers. During this phase, no small farmers (of the communal, old resettlement, or A1 farm) were considered, and when eventually they were considered under Phase II, this was with animal-drawn implements (RBZ 2008: 4–5). The envisaged outcomes based on this differentiated support framework are telling of the bias against the small farmers.

A preliminary assessment of the Command Agriculture Scheme launched by the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ), however, seems to show that it has opened up access to inputs across the various farm models (the communal, old resettlement, A1, and A2) on an equal footing. The GoZ launched the Command Agriculture Scheme (also known as the Special Maize Programme for Import Substitution or Targeted Command Agriculture Programme or simply command agriculture) during the 2016/17 season as a state-led contract-farming scheme to stimulate maize production while consequently ensuring food security and substituting maize imports (Mazwi *et al.* 2019). However, its genesis is telling of the general government thinking on ISPs. The scheme was initially targeted at the medium to large A2 farmers with access to irrigation facilities. This was later expanded to all interested A2 farmers before being further extended to the communal areas, old resettlement, and A1 farmers. Only a small proportion of smallholder farmers eventually received inputs under command agriculture during that season; with communal farmers at 1.9 per cent, small-scale commercial farms (SSCFs), 7.7 per cent, A1 farmers, 8 per cent, and old resettlement area (ORA), 6.2 per cent (World Bank 2019).

As recent evidence again from Mvurwi on tractors and mechanisation of farming suggests, the small farmers have moved beyond their characterisation as largely 'subsistence-oriented' and are showing real signs of commercialisation especially in the wake of fast-track (Shonhe 2019a). This seems to support earlier indications on rural differentiation outcomes and the phenomenon of 'accumulation from below' among the smaller A1 farmers by Scoones *et al.* (2012), as noted previously. They are managing such feats despite the largely biased manner in which government ISPs treat the small farmer, mainly through looking beyond the government for financing for agricultural enterprise, and, more importantly, in reference to the availability of a critical output market where they can sell their produce.

In many instances, the financing gap and access to agricultural commodity circuits has largely been negotiated through commercial banks and contract-based purchasing (Shonhe 2017; Chemura, Chambati and Mazwi 2018) as well as re-investment of the proceeds from sales of agricultural crops and animals (Shonhe 2019b).

4 SMALL OR LARGE FARM? EMERGING EVIDENCE ON EFFICACY AND CAPACITY

4.1 Land utilisation

At an initial glance, the data show that on average, the small (A1) farmers have a higher land utilisation rate as compared to their medium- to large-scale (A2) counterparts. The land utilisation rate here simply measures the total cultivated land against the total landholding per farmer. The average arable landholding for the A1 farmers surveyed in Mvurwi is 4.9ha. The average land cleared for various cropping activities was 2.3ha (46 per cent) and 3.5ha (71.4 per cent) for 2016 and 2017 respectively. The difference is quite stark when compared with the A2 farmers who on average hold about 54.2ha and in the 2017/18 cropping season managed an average 24.3ha, representing a land utilisation rate of 44.8 per cent.

The land available as arable for the small farmers is further reduced through incidences of land-sharing, considering their already meagre total landholding. Land-sharing among resettled family members is common and has a tendency of reducing the land sizes available for individual household cropping. However, it has the effect of pushing the land utilisation for a given parcel of land. For example, an interviewed A1 farmer, Mudzimiriri (2019)⁴ noted:

There are five families who do farming on my plot. I have two daughters and their husbands they have a hectare each. Then my son and his wife I gave them a hectare. I use 2ha and the other hectare is being currently tilled by my uncle. All these five families draw their livelihoods from these 6ha of land.

The effect of such land-sharing is that each family retains a smaller piece of land for their production and while undermining commercialisation due to limited land, it increases land utilisation on the small farms. While the larger A2 farmers have relatively larger land sizes where sub-divisions do not necessarily negatively reduce cropping viability, the practice is not common among the A2 farmers. It was observed through subsequent informant interviews that land-sharing is more common among the smaller farmers compared to the large farmers owing to the heightened role of wider social relations and extensions by the smaller

farmers, a feature which is not as common among the larger farmers.

Land utilisation also differs with different crops. As will be shown in Section 4.2 on crop choice, the small farmers devote larger areas towards food crops such as maize compared to the large farmers, who seem to devote larger areas towards purely cash crops such as tobacco.

4.2 Crop choice, diversification, and marketing

With maize being the staple grain in most of Zimbabwe, it is also interesting to note the level of priority the different farmers put on maize production. On average, A2 farmers allocated 17.4ha (32 per cent) and 12.9ha (23.8 per cent) of their land towards maize production for the 2015/16 and 2016/17 cropping seasons respectively. For the A1 farmers, the average area allocated for maize production was 1.2ha (25.3 per cent) for 2015/16 and 1.7ha (35.5 per cent) for the 2016/17 seasons respectively (see Table 4.1). The statistics seem indicative of the primacy of the goal of food security at the household level for small farmers. An A1 farmer, as noted by Gwenzi (2019)⁵ in an interview observed:

Maize is a stable crop and is grown mainly for food security reasons in these areas. Maize production is less burdensome as compared to tobacco farming. Also in terms of income-earning, maize always gives a fair return. I can describe maize as life and there is no way us tobacco farmers can reach a point of totally shunning maize production. Added to this, maize helps us with labour payments as well as rations for the workers hired on a casual basis for a wider range of crops.

This situation appears to differ from the larger A2 farmers who seem to cultivate maize primarily as a cash crop and as part of a basket that includes other cash crops. Their priorities also seem more on other cash crops such as tobacco which fetch a higher market value as compared to maize. This could explain the devotion of a lesser percentage of their total arable land

Table 4.1 Area allocated for maize and tobacco cropping

Cropping season	Average total arable land (ha)		Maize area (ha)				Tobacco area (ha)			
	A1 (N=310)	A2 (N=40)	A1 (N=310)		A2 (N=40)		A1 (N=310)		A2 (N=40)	
	(ha)	(ha)	(ha)	%	(ha)	%	(ha)	%	(ha)	%
2014/15	4.9	54.2	1.24	25.3			1.10	22.4		
2015/16	4.9	54.2	1.24	25.3	17.4	32	1.2	24.5	2	3.7
2016/17	4.9	54.2	1.69	35.5	12.9	23.8	0.8	16.3	3.1	5.9

Source: Authors' APRA survey 2017–19.

for maize production. Besides, the macroeconomic conditions in Zimbabwe emanating from a company under economic restrictions, contested as they may be, entail that economy-wide access to credit is limited. Yet merchants involved in cash-crop contract farming target only a few commodities, while the state-mediated command agriculture has a low outreach. For large farms, this has the effect of limiting farmers' ability to till land in ways that negatively impact on productivity more significantly compared to smallholders.

A closely related feature is the percentage sold and retained from the season's total maize output. Figures from the 2014/15 and 2015/16 seasons among the small A1 farmers reveal an almost constant figure of what is retained at the household before the surplus is traded. For example, during the 2014/15 season, from an average total maize output of 17.0 tonnes of maize, 5.6 tonnes were retained for the household with the rest sold. In the following 2015/16 season, from an average total output of 19.4 tonnes, 5.5 tonnes were retained while the rest were sold. This represents 67 per cent and 71.6 per cent sales respectively. The almost constant figures for maize retained are suggestive of the primary motives for maize production which are household consumption and food security as well as for labour payments rather than sale. For instance, in an interview, Chikwambire (2019)⁶ indicated that on average 2 tonnes are used for labour payments. Smallholder farmers also maintain strong linkages with relatives in the Chiweshe communal area who are often offered support in food supplies. This probably explains as well why fertiliser application is not a priority for maize among the small farmers. In contrast, A2 farmers produced an average of 89.9 tonnes and 81.1 tonnes in the 2015/16 and 2016/17 seasons and sold 85.5 tonnes and 78.1 tonnes respectively. This represents 95.1 per cent and 96.3 per cent sales of total production, indicative of a higher commercialisation index.

In terms of diversification to cash crops and hence increasing commercialisation, the A1 farmers have also taken up tobacco production, with more than half (60.9

per cent) of A1 farmers involved in tobacco production. As shown in Table 4.1, on average, A1 farmers devoted 1.1ha (22.4 per cent), 1.2ha (24.5 per cent), and 0.8ha (16.3 per cent) for the 2014/15, 2015/16, and 2016/17 seasons respectively.

In contrast, the A2 farmers devoted an average of 2ha (3.7 per cent) and 3.1ha (5.9 per cent) of their land towards tobacco in the 2015/16 and 2016/17 seasons respectively. The differences in land utilised for cropping programmes, as a percentage of the total arable land allocated is indicative of the level of productivity per unit of land available. Simply put, the proportion of total land utilised and cropped land for key food and cash crops to total landholdings indicate that A1 farmers perform better than A2 farmers, as Shonhe (2019b) also reveals in a similar study in Hwedza District.

4.3 Input sourcing and utilisation

Input sourcing is an important indicator of the different financing avenues available and relied upon by the different farmer categories. Farmers either use personal funding to purchase the various inputs required for crop and livestock production, or they can defer to various forms of contract arrangements available, including command agriculture. During the 2016/17 season, 22.3 per cent of the A1 farmers accessed their inputs through contract farming, while only 1 per cent accessed their inputs through the Command Agriculture Scheme. These figures are quite low when compared with the A2 farmers. During the 2016/17 season, 45.2 per cent of the farmers accessed their inputs via the Command Agriculture Scheme while 90 per cent accessed the same through contract-farming arrangements. Outside these two avenues, farmers have to depend on their own finances to acquire inputs from agro-dealers, which was true for 70 per cent of the A1 farmers during the 2016/17 season. A further analysis of the data from Mvurwi reveals that fertiliser use is higher among the larger (A2) farmers as compared to their smaller (A1) counterparts. On average, fertiliser devoted towards maize averaged 707.2 kg/ha for the large farmers as compared to 383.2 kg/ha for the smaller farmers in

the 2016/17 farming seasons. For tobacco, A2 farmers applied 1546.1 kg/ha of fertiliser compared to 666 kg/ha for the same season.

Comparatively A2 farmers tend to access all financing options available and therefore rely less on their own funding for sourcing inputs as compared to their A1 counterparts. The difference in the number of farmers that accessed the government's command agriculture inputs during its maiden season of 2016/17 is quite stark as shown above. This is suggestive of two things. Firstly, the smaller farmers may also be in the habit of using alternatives for (inorganic) fertiliser such as cattle manure, a rational possibility given their smaller pieces of land. Secondly, the smaller farmers seem to have fewer options outside of self-financing for access to inputs such as fertiliser. For the large farmers, the higher fertiliser use on maize is indicative of their commercial thrust, with a view to attaining a higher maize output in terms of tonnage per hectare, which can fetch the farmers more on the market. This makes sense when one considers that the commercial thrust would be on maximising tonnage output out of the smaller area devoted for maize. Alternatively, the higher fertiliser use of the large farmers is indicative of their having more options for accessing inputs such as fertiliser, including through government ISPs such as command agriculture, as in-depth interviews revealed.

4.4 Agricultural mechanisation and irrigation

Another key pointer to the increasing commercialisation prospects of the A1 farmers is the increasing use of tractors and other mechanical implements in their farming activities. A tractor is widely regarded as a serious investment towards agricultural commercialisation. For the A1 farmers in the 2016/17 season, their top two modes for land preparation for their top crop were own oxen (52.8 per cent) and hired tractor (26.6 per cent). For their second crop, the top two preferences are own oxen (51.8 per cent) and hired tractor (25.8 per cent). Only 4.3 per cent own tractors, with 90.6 per cent owning at least one ox-plough.

For the large A2 farmers, 39.5 per cent relied on their own oxen for land preparation in 2016/17, while 13.2 per cent and 28.9 per cent relied on their own tractor and borrowed tractors respectively. At least 73.2 per cent own at least one ox-plough and 30.4 per cent own at least one tractor, with one farmer owning five tractors. The net effect is that both the A1 and A2 farmers are increasingly turning to the use of tractors for their land preparation needs which allows for higher land utilisation rates, given the efficiency of the tractor

over manual human labour in this regard. However, A1 farmers still rely more on their own animals compared to hired animals and tractors which is a cheaper option and manageable, given the scale of operation. The A2 farmers use more tractors, both their own and hired, which is more costly and therefore less financially viable.

There is also a vast difference in terms of use of irrigation in agricultural production between the two sets of farmers. Only a very minute percentage of the small farmers seem to rely on irrigation for their cropping water requirements, which may well be in line with the climatic conditions of the area, characterised by high annual rainfall. As the data show, 99 per cent of A1 farmers do not have any irrigation plot, 96 per cent do not own any irrigation pipe, and 95 per cent have no individual water pump. On the contrary, 41.5 per cent of the A2 farmers have established irrigation infrastructure after settlement. At least 5.3 per cent have centre pivots, 47.5 per cent with irrigation facilities, and 65.5 per cent owning at least one individual water pump.

Notwithstanding higher land utilisation on the back of limited access to financial resources in accord with inadequate government and public support, uneven support renders superior productive capacity development to larger farms. In a way, high commodity income arising from higher productivity undergirded by superior resourcing culminates in improved productive asset endowment. On the other hand, the finance packages accessible to larger farms privilege the sector with capacity to acquire new technologies, including tractors and irrigation infrastructure.

4.5 Asset accumulation

Asset accumulation is an important indicator of the wellbeing of farmers. The ownership of brick houses under asbestos, the number of cattle, goats, or indigenous chickens purchased after settlement from 2000 indicate the performance of the different categories of farmers. While based on a significantly smaller sample, the percentage of A2 farmers with at least one house made of brick under asbestos roofing stood at 49.7 per cent. In contrast to this figure, 54.6 per cent of A1 farmers had at least one brick house under asbestos at their homestead. This is indicative of how small farmers are also accumulating fixed assets, often better than their A2 counterparts. While some of the larger farmers may have inherited such structures from the former (white) farmers upon resettlement, the path to resettlement for the small farmers indicates that they have had to build such assets only after resettlement, given the smaller units allocated.

Table 4.2 Selected asset endowment

Asset	Percentage	
	A2	A1
Farming sectors	A2	A1
House (brick under asbestos) (1+)	49.7	54.6
Grinding mills	15.4	4.2
Tractor	13.2	4.3
Cars	31	19.5
Television	69.2	63.1
Barns	41	56.5
Water pumps	64.1	5.6
Cattle owned (10+)	48.7	30.4
Goats owned (10+)	0	0.9
Indigenous chickens (50+)	5.2	67.4
Broilers (50+)	20.5	1.3%

Source: Authors' APRA survey 2017–19.

In terms of cattle ownership, another key value store and indicator of accumulation, 30.4 per cent of A1 farmers had ten or more herd of cattle compared to 48.7 per cent for the A2, yet the former utilise more of these for land preparation. Interestingly, A1 farmers have invested more in tobacco barns (56.5 per cent), indicating their long-term commitment to the cash crop. Regarding other assets that indicate the social status of farmers, there is no major difference between small- and large-scale farmers. For instance, the ownership of television sets stands at 69.2 per cent and 63.1 per cent for the A2 and A1 farmers respectively. Similarly, motor vehicle ownership is at 31 per cent and 19.5 per cent respectively. A major gap exists in the ownership of water pumps where 64.1 per cent of the A2 farmers compared to 5.6 per cent of A1 farmers own the asset.

Overall, A2 farmers are doing better than A1 farmers in the ownership of household and productive assets; however, in some cases the latter are performing better. The potential for accumulation among farmers in the two categories is therefore not homogenous and tends to depend on individual household access to financial resources, an indication that there is scope for commercialisation and greater accumulation on the small farm as on the large ones.

4.6 Labour employment patterns

Another variable to assess is the presence of permanent workers across the two farming models, which is a key indicator of the presence of capitalist modes of production and likely increasing commercialisation. As noted earlier, one key change wrought by the FTLRP in Zimbabwe has been on the agrarian labour structure prevailing pre-2000 (Moyo 2011b; Chambati 2011; Shonhe 2019b). Given the importance of labour to agricultural enterprise, it is

not surprising that a significant number amongst the A1 farmers are also showing a greater affinity towards employing permanent labour, a key indicator of their entrepreneurial mind-set and a pointer to the presence of capitalist modes of production. As depicted in Table 4.3, 31.2 per cent and 22.9 per cent of the small farmers employ at least three permanent general female and male workers respectively, compared to 43.6 per cent (female) and 33.3 per cent (male) for the large farmers.

Probably driven by the large expanse of land over which work is carried out, the large farmers have relatively larger workforces per farm. This can be looked at from the rationalisation of allocation of workforce, which might inherently be better managed over a smaller area compared to a larger one.

The increased access to land by former permanent farm workers and their release from the clutches of the 'domestic government' (Rutherford 2001; Moyo 2011b) has also meant that farmers can no longer solely rely on these to satisfy their labour requirements. As the data from Mvurwi suggest, there are considerably more temporary workers than permanent workers. As Table 4.3 shows, 43.6 per cent and 59 per cent of the large farmers engage at least five temporary female and male workers respectively. The easy interpretation of this may be that rural inhabitants who were erstwhile full-time labourers now have more alternatives to sustaining their livelihoods, though of course a lot of other factors may actually be at play.

As data from Mvurwi show, 58 per cent of farm workers interviewed actually own a piece of land that they cultivate, the majority owning just 1ha (see also Shonhe, Scoones and Murimbarimba, forthcoming; Scoones *et al.* 2018). 95.7 per cent of farm workers who own land acquired such land after 2000. As a

Table 4.3 Labour requirements

Labour category	Percentage	
	A1	A2
Farming sectors	A1	A2
Permanent (female) (3+)	22.9	33.3
Permanent (male) (3+)	31.2	48.8
Temporary (female) (5+)	-	43.6
Temporary (male) (5+)	-	59

Source: Authors' APRA survey 2017–19.

result, only 11.7 per cent are employed full-time as permanent workers on the various farm types. For small farmers, their labour requirements in the wake of increased commercialisation may not be far off, especially when taking into consideration their higher land utilisation levels. Their source of labour is likely to be more diverse and include a significant component of family labour. This may in effect give them a higher input–output ratio, where labour accounts for a significant component of the inputs.

Importantly, small farmers tend to have lower operational costs due to less reliance on hired labour and green revolutions inputs. In this sense, as an example, the TIMB (2015) illustrated that contracted small-scale tobacco production had the lowest average cost per hectare (US\$2.37) compared to medium-scale (US\$3.05) and irrigated LSCFs (US\$3.21). As a result, whereas contracted small-scale tobacco has an average return of 16 per cent, medium-scale farmers have a negative 1 per cent return. In the case of maize, besides differences in the use of fertilisers and labour, less reliance on tractors by A1 farmers compared to A2 farmers translate to lower costs in fuel, repair, and maintenance for maize production (MAMID 2016).

5 DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS

While 'conventional' development economics wisdom has tended to emphasise the consolidation of land and a thrust towards medium- to large-scale farms in addressing Africa's food deficit and general economic development and rural development goals, the reality on the ground seems to point to something different. A key realisation from the data coming from Mvurwi is that the smallholder farmer stands to play a key role in meeting these broad development goals, particularly in an environment where climate change, changed labour relations, and a less than conducive macroeconomic environment is prevalent.

One key take-home from the research is that the more immediate goal of household food security is as much achievable by the small farmers as it is by the medium- to large-scale farmers. The small farmers achieve this by ensuring the retention of an almost consistent amount of their maize output. The almost consistent amount retained suggests that this is sufficient to guarantee food security at the household level as well as to meet wage labour commitments. This is further suggestive that the production of staple grains such as maize by small farmers seeks to satisfy first household food security before any surplus can be traded.

When looked at from their better land utilisation capacity, it therefore means that any attempts at supporting farmers towards realising both household and national food security can be entrusted as much to the small farmer as any other farmer, including their larger counterparts. This in turn dovetails with the early independence cereal production boom noted by Rohrbach (1989) which was anchored on the contribution of smallholder farmers to the national maize output. While the larger A2 market the bulk of their maize, and in the process contribute to national food security, some authors have decried how this has not translated into immediate household food once such maize enters into formal commodity chains (*ibid.*).

For the larger farmers, food security can potentially be attained on the back of either profit or retention of some of the maize output. While the A2 farmers may have higher maize output, their profit motive may have negative consequences on immediate household food security. A comparison of output and sales figures for

the A2 farmers for maize output, for the 2015/16 and 2016/17 seasons, reveals these dynamics. The small A1 farmers sell more than half of their surplus maize component to aggregators, among whom may also be some large A2 farmers. In the 2014/15 season, the percentage of A1 maize sold to aggregators stood at 67.1 per cent, compared to 70.9 per cent in the 2015/16 season, and 65.5 per cent in the 2016/17 season.

The data on sources of inputs such as fertiliser for main crops is a big indictment on the state's biased approach to ISPs. That an overwhelming majority of the small A1 farmers actually source their fertiliser from agro-dealers is an indicator of the unreliability of the state as a source of such inputs. Yet, with comparatively smaller landholdings, increasing the access of small farmers to inputs under ISPs can go a long way in helping them attain higher land utilisation rates, possibly attain higher production outputs, and meet subsequent and related economic outcomes. Thus, even as governments institute ISPs to support production amongst farmers, there is no reason whatsoever for the exclusion of the smallholder farmer from such initiatives. Such support has to move beyond a 'welfare' approach towards the small farmers; rather, it ought to acknowledge that they too can compete equally on a commercial scale as much as their medium- to large-scale counterparts.

As the data on asset accumulation clearly show, there is a group amongst the smallholder farmers who have very high commercialisation ambitions and are proving to be quite adept at the task. As has been shown in Section 4.5 on asset accumulation, some small A1 farmers are accumulating more essential assets such as houses and tobacco barns than the medium/large A2 farmers. Both sectors are accumulating cattle, applied as a store of value, even though the larger farmers tend to have bigger herds, probably due to their larger land sizes which allow larger grazing pasture. Importantly, small farmers are meeting their commercialisation and business goals without much in the form of government support. Their situation and outcomes can radically change if the correct government support is extended to them as well.

With the changed agrarian structure in the wake of the FTLRP, the small-farm concept becomes

a more appropriate farming model in as far as its requirements and deployment of labour is concerned. The deployment of family labour as a key component of the labour requirements of the small farm is generally agreed, and while the data from Mvurwi do not make this distinction, the fact of lesser numbers of both permanent and temporary waged labour on small farms indirectly supports this. More interesting is the fact that both sets of farmers actually hire in permanent workers, illustrative of an entrepreneurial thrust, driven by a profit motive. Small farmers are evolving from their characterisation as subsistence farmers to being small capitalist farmers in their own right. The consideration of extra labour outside family labour puts the small farmers on a par with their large farmer counterparts in terms of labour requirements on the farms. Again, this capitalist thrust has largely been driven by financing outside state support and private financing instruments, as has largely been afforded to their large counterparts.

It is a reality that labour dynamics have changed on the farms since the FTLRP. Whereas previously farm workers were tied to the 'domestic government' with little access to land and an alternative source of livelihood outside farm employment, the post-2000 setting is characterised by farm workers who also possess land and actually farm on it. As shown in the data under labour employment patterns, more than half (58 per cent) of waged farm workers also possess a piece of land on which they do their own farming. In an economy that is not functioning at an optimal rate, it will remain difficult to pay farm labourers competitive wages on a large-scale farm. Also, given that the majority of workers are not necessarily tied to any particular farm, this presents a potential challenge to farmers meeting their full labour requirements to meet production.

It may also be worth pointing out how deployment of surplus income from farming enterprises seems to suggest a radical shift in terms of how farmers and their communities view 'success' when assessing their farming endeavours. While it would have been the norm for former white commercial farmers to have their wealth assessed in terms of both farm and non-farm assets or income, it seems the 'new farmers' value re-investment in farm-based assets more. Thus as the data show, the endowment of assets such as a brick house under asbestos is quite ubiquitous among both sets of farmers: with the A1 farmer leading. Despite varying land sizes, there are farmers among both sets who own a substantial herd of cattle or goats.

The endowment and choice of assets seem to be informed by the social setting within which rural economies subsist, as much as it may also be informed

by production logic. As such, most re-investment in both fixed and non-fixed assets currently happens on-farm rather than off-farm. For example, while in the past, tractor ownership was associated with large-scale commercial farming, even the small farmers seem to see value in both its use as well as ownership. As suggested by data on assets endowment, there is no significant difference between the small and large farmers in some of the productive and social reproductive assets being accumulated from farming.

6 CONCLUSION



Based on the survey, a number of general conclusions from the data from Mvurwi can be made, many of which are indicative of the productive capacity of the smallholder farmers, hitherto considered largely subsistence-oriented. The study shows that under current conditions, the smaller A1 farmers have better land utilisation rates compared to their larger A2 counterparts. There is also strong evidence pointing to the agency and capacity of the small farmers to match their medium- to large-scale counterparts in terms of ambition and realisation of commercial production outcomes. For example, the choice of crop, encompassing both staple food and cash crops shows that the traditional distinction of the small farmers as solely subsistence farmers no longer holds. The small farmers hire in both temporary and permanent labour as much as their large counterparts. They are accumulating similar assets to their large counterparts and also defer to modern mechanisation for production, notably through ownership and hiring in of tractors for tillage services.

The deferment to private agro-dealers as the main source of primary inputs by small farmers is indicative of how the state overlooks support to small farmers on a more commercial level. If government ISPs were to consider the inclusion of smallholder farmers with the same commercial thrust as accorded to medium- to large-scale farmers, there is greater potential to meet broad development goals linked to agriculture, targeting a wider section of previously disadvantaged populations. The potential to address and break the prevalent low productivity poverty trap as well as push boundaries towards commercialisation within the rural economy is enormous.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 Introverted accumulation concerns itself with realising profit focused on the domestic market.
- 2 The A1 farm scheme is a villagised settlement scheme with farmers holding an average of 20ha of land in total, 6ha being arable and about 12ha being shared pasture land. The A2 scheme is based on medium-scale capitalist farms on independent plots averaging 100ha.
- 3 An assessment by UNDP (2002) of the FTLRP notes that the A1 model is of two types, villagised and self-contained, with the villagised model affording settlers at least 3ha of arable land in addition to communal grazing land, with a total holding extending up to 70ha depending on the agro-ecological region.
- 4 All informants' names have been anonymised. Personal interview, A1 farmer Mudzimiriri, 23 July 2019, Mvurwi.
- 5 Personal interview, A1 farmer Gwenzi, 24 July 2019, Mvurwi.
- 6 Personal interview, A1 farmer Chikwambire, 23 February 2019, Mvurwi.

Chitapi, T. and Shonhe, T. (2020) *Small is Beautiful? Policy Choices and Outcomes for Agrarian Change for Resettled Farmers in Mvurwi District*, Working Paper 36, Brighton: Future Agricultures Consortium

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ISBN: 978-1-78118-658-9



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

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

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