



OBSTACLES FACING EMERGING WOMEN FARMERS IN THE WESTERN CAPE AND NORTHERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

Compiled by Penny Parenzee



SURPLUS
PEOPLE
PROJECT

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Compiled by
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ACRONYMS

- ANC African National Congress
BATAT Broadening Access to Agriculture Trust
CBOs Community Based Organisations
DLA Department of Land Affairs
FAO Food and Agriculture Organisation
IFSS Integrated Food Security Strategy
IRDP Integrated Rural Development Programme
LRAD Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development
NGOs Non Governmental Organisations
RDP Reconstruction Development Program
SLAG Settlement/Land Acquisition Grant (1997)
SPP Surplus People Project

PREFACE

The research detailed in this report looks at women as they make a living from farming while facing discrimination on the basis of their sex, race and class. The women in the study live in the Western and Northern Cape and see farming as a survival strategy, a means of alleviating their poverty and that of their communities. Therefore their goals and expectations are modest. They speak of wanting a better relationship between themselves on the one hand and government and commercial farmers on the other, with emerging women farmers being shown more respect and consideration and getting better protection against eviction. In terms of resources all they seem to expect is some capacity building, inclusion in marketing networks and assistance with tractors and livestock.

In one sense the report bears out the women farmers in their modesty. It shows that when the emerging farmers have secured access to land, the kind of limited support they ask of NGOs, government and commercial farmers makes a telling difference in the success or failure of farming projects. However, even the women in the most successful of projects are subject to all the frustrations that sexism, racism and class exploitation impose on emerging women farmers. And of course, the vast majority of potential and aspirant women farmers do not have access to land. The report thus suggest that this modesty reflects the very sexist conditioning responsible for the problems emerging women farmers are trying to overcome. It calls for the consideration of a much more radical approach grounded in a feminist strategy for women's liberation, agrarian reform and food sovereignty.

The reader will find value in the report's careful exposition of the views and experiences of the emerging women farmers, as well as in its critical engagement with existing policy and its clear and spirited exposition and advocacy of feminism, agrarian reform and food sovereignty. This research is an instalment in an on-going effort of the Surplus People Project to build knowledge and develop understanding of agriculture and food systems from the point of view of the oppressed and exploited. Previous instalments included an analysis of agriculture policies over the last twenty years, a study of livelihood strategies of the rural poor on the West Coast and a look at the structures of managing water for agriculture. It is recommended that this report is read in conjunction with these others.

The researchers are understandably and appropriately careful to draw attention to the limitations of their sample sizes, research methods and conclusions. However, as a society we will make a huge mistake if we use this scholarly reticence as an excuse to brush aside the concerns and needs of emerging women farmers. In our striving for better and greater versions of freedom and justice, it is society's most oppressed and marginalised sections that show the way. We cannot refuse the opportunity offered by this report to listen to the voices of emerging women farmers.

RONALD WESSO,
Cape Town



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report focuses on analysing emerging women farmers' perception of the obstacles they face in securing land and related productive resources. Consideration is also given to the way women identify and interpret the skewed power relations that define the food systems in which they operate. The perception, experiences and expectations of emerging women farmers are analysed against a backdrop of South Africa's existing land reform policies and food security strategy.

In order to gain insight into the perception, experiences and expectations of emerging women farmers, interviews were conducted with a total of seventeen (17) emerging women farmers, of which twelve (12) were involved in projects in the Northern Cape and five (5) were involved in projects in the Western Cape. Of the farming projects in which these emerging women farmers were involved, three (3) of the projects were women only projects and three (3) were mixed (women and men) group projects.

The report is structured as follows: First, an overview of the existing land reform policies and food security strategy is provided. The review of these policies and strategy applied a gendered analysis coupled with a critical analysis entailed in the concept of the food sovereignty approach. Second, the perceptions, experiences and expectations of emerging women farmers are presented, with specific attention given to the obstacles which these women face. Third, an analysis over women's experiences in light of the existing policies and strategy is conducted and some questions for consideration introduced.

LAND REFORM AND FOOD SECURITY: SOUTH AFRICAN POLICIES & STRATEGY

Land Reform Policies in South Africa

From as early as 1913, South African legislation systematically stripped black South Africans of their rights to own, reside on and cultivate land. Consequently, land reform has been viewed by the government as integral to bringing about a more equitable and just society and economy. The White Paper on South African Land Policy (ANC 1997) was the first document to officially map out the ANC government's approach to land reform. It consists of three components: land restitution, land redistribution and tenure reform.

These policy interventions form part of a broader state-driven approach to development that places an obligation on the government to progressively realize the social and cultural rights of citizens while respecting existing property rights arrangements (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996). While these laws, policies and programmes have been created to respond to land reform, government has been criticized for developing policies and programmes which systematically overlook, and at times even sanction, sources of vulnerability other than race.

Food Security Strategy

The commodification of food, combined with South Africa's high poverty levels, forces poor citizens to spend disproportionate amounts of their income on food – or that they fail to purchase sufficient food altogether. Despite food security obtaining attention at the national level, more especially through the social rights provisions contained in Chapter 2 of the Constitution¹, the majority of black people continue to experience food insecurity.

South Africa, like many other governments, develops its food policies with a view towards food security. The earliest policy statement on food security was contained in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP 1994), which identified food security as a basic human need. This framework was then refined in subsequent policy papers, specifically the Agriculture White Paper (DOA 1995), Agricultural Policy Discussion Document (DOA 1999) and the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP 1999). Following this, government launched its national food security strategy, the Integrated Food Security Strategy (IFSS), in 2000. This strategy grew out of a series of consultative engagement with a number of key players from both national and provincial spheres of government, as well as CBOs, NGOs, public agencies and universities (IFSS, 2000, pg 11). Subsequently, government also established a food security working group to research strategies for achieving food security.

The government's emphasis on food security is criticised from a food sovereignty perspective as food security emphasizes people's access to food and disregards the circumstances in which people gain access to food. Therefore the food security strategy, while acknowledging that a right of access to food is necessary, fails to acknowledge or critically assess "questions of power" (Patel 2009). By ignoring these background conditions, it can neither identify, nor critique any exploitative practices or systematically unequal power relations that define food systems.

¹ Section 27 of the Constitution of South Africa (1996) states that "Everyone has the right to have access to ... "sufficient food and water" and compels the state to "take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of each of these rights". In addition, Section 28 specifies that every child, i.e. persons younger than 18 years, has the right to basic nutrition.



In sum: In applying a gendered analysis together with the critical food sovereignty perspective, it becomes evident that South Africa's food strategy and land policies are fundamentally problematic in at least four respects: (1) Land and food policies are conceived as entirely separate policy areas and the links between them are unclear; (2) Land and food policies are based on an inadequate conception of gender² as a barrier to accessing land, productive resources, and food; (3) They identify no specific mechanisms or interventions that will put into practice their normative commitment to gender equality; and (4) They are premised on the assumption that poverty and socio-economic inequality can be alleviated by increased access to markets in land and food.

While government's food security strategy and its land reform policies signal a commitment to assisting vulnerable groups that wish to own land and purchase food, these policies do not elaborate mechanisms that diminish the impact of skewed gender relations and tend to perpetuate dependency on both the state and the market.

² This report makes a distinction between sex and gender. Sex refers to the biological differences between men and women. Gender refers to socially constructed norms about the identities, behaviours, capacities and sexual orientations associated with male vs. female bodies. Gender, in other words, prescribes both masculine and feminine norms and limits the permissible behaviours and attitudes both women and men may display. Even though gender cannot be equated with women, many government agencies, including the Department of Land Affairs, think of "gender" as only affecting women (Walker 2005).

VOICES OF EMERGING WOMEN FARMERS

Farming is a means of survival for women, their families and for the community. Emerging women farmers are therefore heavily dependent on the income generated through farming. However, based on the information gleaned from this research, emerging women farmers, regardless of whether they are involved in mixed-or women-only farming projects are confronted with a host of obstacles, which include:

- **Difficulties accessing and securing land:** The processes for acquiring land on which to farm are complicated, unfamiliar, time-consuming and costly as it involves several engagements with municipal officials who are located at offices which are far from where women farmers reside. Many women expressed feeling intimidated when engaging with government officials.
- **Problems with formalising tenure rights or lease agreements:** The majority of farming projects occur on municipal-owned land and while land has been secured for two years or more, none of the agreements which they have with the municipality involved written documentation or formal proof confirming these arrangements. Several women expressed concern about this tenuous arrangement with the municipality.
- **Concerns about securing continued access to land:** Not only are women uncertain about the likelihood of being granted an extended leasing arrangement (in light of tenuous arrangements), but some of the projects are also on land where land claims are pending. In addition to these uncertainties, emerging women farmers stated there is a lack of transparency in land redistribution procedures and/or they lack an understanding of these procedures.
- **Pressure to ensure that land is used productively in order to demonstrate the viability of their farming projects:** Women indicated that based on the agreement with the municipality, in order to ensure that they do not have the land taken away they need to make optimal use of the land. However, they face social and environmental challenges which hamper productive use of the land, for example inadequate supply of water, no drought support, lack of resources to put up fencing, as well as inadequate infrastructure such as roads to enable ease of movement and transportation of produce as well as affordable labour. All these factors affect women's ability to utilise the land optimally, thus threaten their continual access to municipal land.
- **Inadequate support:** Women revealed that they rely mostly on the Surplus People Project (SPP) for information and advice, and stated that the support which they receive from municipalities, local community structures such as Advice offices as well as commercial farmers is mostly inadequate. Furthermore, women expressed frustration at the inefficient processes within municipal structures and the inaccessibility of government departments.

In reflecting on the relationship between women and men in terms of the dynamics which emerged in groups, women, whether from the women only groups or mixed groups, indicated that power struggles emerged resulting in secrecy regarding funding and a failure to work together in order to be supportive towards each other.

Through the introduction of discussions on gender relations, what became apparent was that women felt undermined and undervalued by men. Women involved in mixed group projects stated that the men tend to underestimate female leadership and/or resent being led by a woman. They added that women are excluded from project planning processes. Women in women-only farming projects echoed these feelings and stated that men oppress women because they have the perception that they can do the work better than women. Women further mentioned being aware of the limited involvement of women in mixed group projects and that in projects started by men, the ideas of women are often dismissed. With regard to the ability to farm, women acknowledged that they find it difficult doing the hard physical labour, however, this factor in no way influenced the perception women had of their ability as farmers.

In fact, women readily identified the strengths which they bring to farming projects, namely their perseverance and ability to manage the many facets of a project.

ANALYSIS

The situation in which emerging women farmers find themselves demonstrates the disjuncture in the interplay between the reality facing poor women and government's response to address poverty. All this occurs within a broader patriarchal social and political context in which institutions and practices effectively exclude and render women, their needs and their contribution to the family, community and society, invisible.

For women emerging farmers, the impact of this interplay is experienced in a number of ways, namely:

Gender blindness: Emerging women farmers present their involvement in farming projects in relation to their care-giving roles towards the family and community. The fact that they have to assume multiple roles, continue to be subjected to barriers in accessing land and becoming independent as well as the devaluing of their contribution is not something with which these women critically engage. A possible explanation for the lack of critical engagement could be attributed to the fact that the discrimination which women experience is normalised to such an extent that women collude in their own oppression. Thus, the consideration that they too can own land and have authority over land is not something which registers within the reality in which women operate. Another possible explanation for the absence of critical engagement is that women have made a purposeful decision to accept their circumstances because the consequences of challenging it will alienate them further, resulting in the limited support systems which currently exist (i.e. family and community) also becoming inaccessible.

False hope and unrealistic expectations: the commitment expressed in the policies and strategy has created a false sense of hope within poor communities, particularly among the most vulnerable that through utilising the opportunities presented, communities can alleviate poverty. However, due to the failure to understand and prioritise women's needs in relation to the broader context which perpetuates women's powerlessness, the conceptualisation of the land reform policies and food security strategy has merely perpetuated the discrimination which women face. The powerlessness of emerging women farmers is exacerbated and maintained through the implementation of ineffective policies and a strategy which fail to ensure that women have access to information and the necessary resources as well as opportunities to build their capacity. In the absence of understanding the nuanced way in which powerlessness is being perpetuated within patriarchal systems, the emerging women farmers thus have the unrealistic expectation that the change they desire is attainable on the basis of few small interventions. More specifically, emerging women farmers appear to believe that if they have the relevant support given to them, then they can farm and they will no longer find themselves impoverished.

Silenced activism: Emerging women farmers generally do not own land and have limited or indirect access to land. The authority of emerging women farmers in relation to the farming process and the produce from their farming is tempered and restricted at various stages. Despite these barriers and constraints which confront women, they are largely uncritical (gender blind) and undemanding. The successful way in which women have been disempowered is evident in the lack of political consciousness among these emerging women farmers. The consequence thereof is that women are not challenging the discrimination to which they are being subjected, they are not collectively organising and instituting actions to ensure their voices are heard. Instead, through gender blindness and operating with false hope and unrealistic expectations, women individually and collectively are silenced, thus make no demands for change.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The collective impact of the afore-mentioned ways in which emerging women farmers experience this interplay contributes to the devastating consequence of locking women and subsequently, their families and communities, into poverty. Addressing the dire situation in which emerging women farmers find themselves requires varied interventions levelled at government institutions, local service providers as well as emerging women farmers and the community at large. The emerging women farmers who participated in this research presented some proposals of the way in which government and other local service providers can assist them in attaining access to productive resources (see Findings and Box 1 below). These proposed interventions, while necessary, are insufficient to bring about a shift in the position in which emerging women farmers find themselves as they only target government and local service providers.

BOX 1:

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING ACCESS OF EMERGING WOMEN FARMERS TO PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES.

Emerging women farmers from selected projects in the Western Cape and Northern Cape recommended that government take the following practical steps in supporting their farming projects:

1. Provision of material resources such as:

- Land, water, farming equipment, fencing & funding
- Infrastructure

2. Provision or improvement of government services such as:

- Providing women farmers with technical assistance, e.g. with drought relief
- Offering training opportunities for women farmers
- Sending women on exchange programmes so they can learn from others in the industry

3. Improving the accountability and participatory orientation of public institutions by:

- Paying attention to the specific needs of emerging women farmers
- Establishing a good relationship between women and government
- Reserving seats for women representatives on district councils
- Making clear commitments to women farmers and fulfilling them
- Encouraging field-visits by government officials to farming areas, for the purposes of directly assessing the needs of women farmers
- Developing a law that protects emerging farmers farming on land subject to land claims, and that offers better protection against evictions from farms
- Linking women with existing farming unions in order to gain experience in unionising and more familiarity with issues confronted by other people working in the sector

4. Facilitating collaboration with key stakeholders such as:

- Local commercial farmers
- Key government departments
- Local businesses, banks and local communities
- Farming unions
- Advice offices



Strategic interventions to bring about a real shift in women's position and ultimately, ensuring access of emerging women farmers to productive resources, are required. Thus, developing such interventions requires careful consideration of the following questions:

Are the needs and experiences of emerging women farmers thoroughly understood?

The current research provides some initial information, however, it is necessary that a deeper exploration into emerging women farmers' perceptions and experiences is undertaken to ensure that the nuances and complexity of their difficult circumstances is captured and thoroughly understood so that the interventions formulated are relevant to the needs of women.

How can raising women's political awareness of their situation be beneficial for these emerging women farmers?

In order to bring about improvement in women's circumstances, women themselves have to be agents of change. However, the first step towards effecting change is consciousness-raising. Based on the circumstances and the depth of women's silence, it is necessary to devise methods of engagement which is related to the provision of support which is responsive to the immediate needs of emerging women farmers. Through the process of providing support and building relationships with women, questions can be raised which facilitate women's critical thinking of discriminatory practices and experiences which they endure.

How can ongoing implementation of ineffective policies and strategies be addressed so that emerging women farmers benefit?

Existing policies and strategies relating to land reform and food security have been continually criticised, yet remain. The implementation of these policies and strategies has also been wrought with problems which have not abated. A far more aggressive and consistent approach to challenging these policies and strategies is required. Thus there is a great need to engage with local activists and other key role-players in order to build local institutions as a way of facilitating ongoing activism to promote a culture of government accountability to women.

What alternative strategies will ensure benefits for emerging women farmers?

The food sovereignty perspective gives recognition to the power imbalances within contexts and is geared towards shifting these so that there is equality. However, the way in which this perspective (and any others) is developed must be critically examined to determine the practical implications and feasibility for emerging women farmers. For example, in shifting orientation towards the food sovereignty perspective, practically how feasible is it for women, within traditional contexts, to access and make decisions regarding land?



CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The existing land reform policies and food security strategy each articulate government's commitment to address past injustices and overcome poverty facing millions of South Africans. However, these policies and strategy are not only problematic in terms of their conceptualisation but also in terms of the translation into practice. Implementation of the policies and strategy reveal a distancing from the expressed commitment and intentions. Despite glimmers of hope in terms of the provision of ad hoc support, the most common reality is that emerging women farmers, their families and their communities are locked into poverty. Ensuring that emerging women farmers have access to productive resources thus requires interventions which not only address some practical barriers to access but also which challenges the patriarchal systems and institutions as well as their related policies and strategies.

Government clearly needs to revisit existing land reform and food security policies. One way of doing so would be to create policies centred on the idea of food sovereignty, which emphasises that all people have the right to food-producing resources and the means to sustain themselves.

Careful consideration of translating such an approach into practice is particularly important for women so that strategies developed ensure women have rights to access and control of productive resources.

BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

This report is the result of a collaborative effort between the Surplus People Project and ON PAR Development. In mid-2009 the Surplus People Project commissioned ON PAR to participate in a pilot study evaluating emerging women farmers' access to productive resources in the Northern and Western Cape. The purpose of the research was to (a) determine the levels of control and access to productive resources women have in their farming projects and (b) to establish whether women in mixed-sex vs. single-sex groups had markedly different control and access to resources.

A two-step research process was designed in order to address these questions, consisting of:

- A literature review which undertakes a gendered analysis of national land reform and food policies.
- The collection of primary data through interviews with female members of women-only farming projects, as well as female members of mixed gendered farming projects in the Northern Cape and Western Cape. The interviews were conducted by representatives of SPP, who applied an interview schedule drawn up by On Par development in consultation with SPP.

Four interviews were conducted with a total of twelve women in the Northern Cape; all but two women were members of mixed sex farming project:

- One interview with five women in Garries, who were members of a mixed sex farming project.
- One interview with two women in Loeriesfontein, who were members of a women-only farming project.
- One interview with two women in Calvinia, who were members of a mixed sex farming project.
- One interview with three women in Nababeep, who were members of a mixed sex farming project.

Two interviews were conducted with a total of five women in the Western Cape:

- One interview with three women in Elandsbaai, who were members of a women-only farming project.
- One interview with two women in Porterville, who were members of a mixed sex farming project.

All the interviewees were informed that the information they shared would be captured in a manner which ensured confidentiality.

The objective of the study, as stated in the project brief, was to evaluate the levels of control and access emerging women farmers have to productive resources. However, the methodology – which consists of interviews with a relatively small sample of women –means that any findings presented here are necessarily tentative. This report gives priority to the narratives of the women interviewed, and their perception of the obstacles that hinder them from becoming more established farmers. More research is needed to verify the extent to which these self-reported obstacles constrain most (if not all) women farmers, all emerging black farmers, and emerging farmers in communal areas.

The majority of women identified the following as key obstacles to their farming, regardless of whether they were involved in mixed- or single-sex farming projects:

- Difficulties accessing land
- Problems with formalising tenure rights or lease agreements
- Concerns about securing continued access to land, due to pending land claims, lack of transparency in land redistribution procedures and/or a lack of understanding of these procedures
- Pressure to ensure that land is used productively in order to demonstrate the viability of their farming projects
- Lack of resources such as inadequate supply of water, drought support, fencing, infrastructure, transportation, finances or affordable labour
- Inadequate support from municipalities & inefficient processes within municipal structures, inadequate support from community structures for e.g. "Advice Office"



INTRODUCTION

Since 1994 the South African government has undertaken an extensive land reform programme. This programme has three objectives: First, to transform racially skewed patterns of land ownership created under Apartheid; Second, to provide redress to citizens who had their land expropriated by the Apartheid government; and Third, to provide emerging black farmers, particularly commercial farmers, with access to arable land.

The land reform programme assumes that access, ownership and control of land prior to 1994 were determined primarily on the basis of racial identity. This assumption is fundamentally flawed because it ignores gender relations, a second major axis of inequality that shaped land ownership and use. South Africa's land reform policies largely ignore the extent to which patriarchal gender relations impede women's access to land and related resources. In fact, despite the state's broad commitment to gender equality, tenure reform policies in particular have entrenched women's dependency vis-à-vis men. Consequently, land reform policies have not significantly improved women's property rights or their rights to occupy and use land (Hall 2003).

Women farm dwellers' vulnerability is further compounded by the pro-market orientation of land redistribution policies.¹ Government understands land reform policies as integral to a broader economic development strategy, specifically one that expands the black middle class. This policy orientation ignores and devalues land use patterns typically associated with women, e.g. subsistence farming or farming for distribution through community or local markets. Instead, it explicitly promotes commercial farming and emerging black farmers' integration into this sector. Land reform policies aim to increase the efficiency of emerging commercial black farmers, but are not committed to transforming the industrial structure and export-orientation of agricultural production. Effectively, the primary objective of land reform is thus boosting agricultural production for the market and increasing the earning capacity of black farmers, who tend to be men. The objective of equalizing power relations between men and women is a marginal concern.

Existing land reform policies are thus transformational in a limited sense only. They support the redistribution of land ownership and use, and redistribution of revenues from agriculture from established farmers to emerging black farmers. However, they do not address the power inequalities that define existing land use patterns and food systems – i.e. the political and economic structures that determine how food is produced, regulated, and distributed. The idea that food systems should be democratised – i.e. that ordinary people should have the right to decide the characteristics of their food systems – is associated with the concept of food sovereignty.

Food sovereignty is a relatively new concept and is frequently contrasted with the more established concept of "food security". The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) defines food security as existing when "all people, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life".² This definition stresses the right of access to food as the primary characteristic of just food systems but is neutral regarding the power relations that define systems that regulate access to food. In terms of food security, for example, food systems that are predicated on hierarchical and exploitative relationships between individuals, private companies and the state, is not problematic.³

¹ The Extension of Security of Tenure Act (ESTA) (1997), Land Reform (Labour Tenants) Act (LTA) (1996), the Provision of Land Assistance Act (1993), the Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy (1996), the Settlement/Land Acquisition Grant (SLAG), the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development Sub-Programme (LRAD), and the Land and Agrarian Reform Project (LARP) (2008) are the major policy instruments governing land redistribution and tenure reform.

By contrast, a critique of power relations is a constituent component of the concept of food sovereignty.² The food sovereignty approach is critical of any food systems that depend on and perpetuate relations of domination and exploitation in the economic, social and/or political spheres. It designates a concern not only with accessing food, but with transforming the economic and political structures that shape access so that they become more equitable and just.

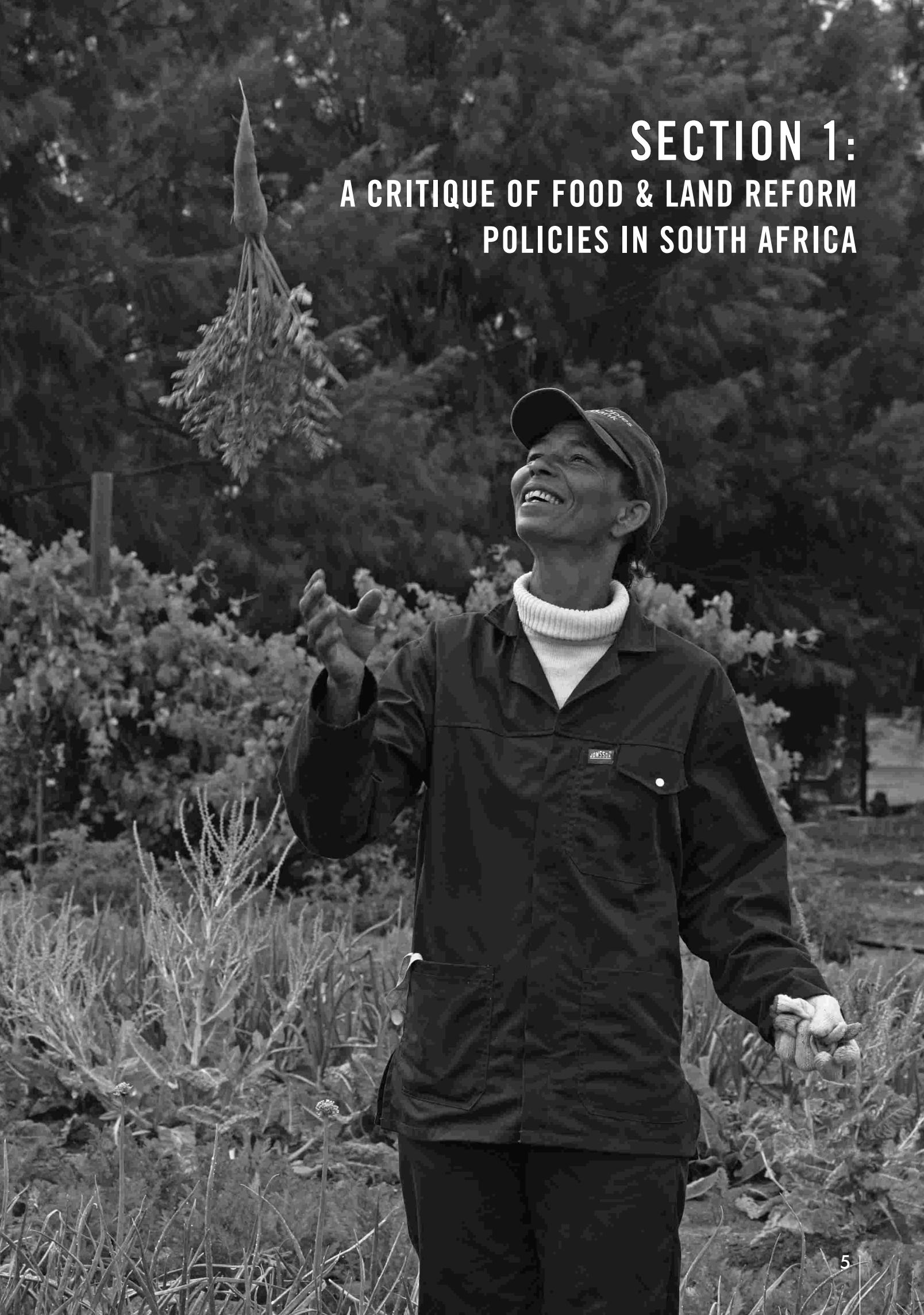
This report uses a gendered analysis together with the critical analysis entailed in the concept of food sovereignty approach to analyse emerging women farmers' perceptions of the obstacles they face in securing land and related productive resources. The way women identify and interpret the skewed power relations that define the food systems in which they operate is considered. These power relations undermine their meaningful participation in decision-making structures, access to state institutions and attendant resources, involvement in masculine forms of farm labour, formal ownership of land, and access to information.

The report is structured as follows:

- Section 1 presents a critique of the government's land reform and food security strategies. It places these policies in historical context and analyses their conceptual underpinnings – particularly their blindness to the inequalities that define the lives of men vs. women. The analysis applied is two-fold: a gendered analysis as well as analysis from a food sovereignty perspective.
- Section 2 gives an account of women farmers' perceptions of the obstacles they face in competing with male farmers and commercial farmers. These findings are arranged thematically.
- Section 3 critically analyses the women farmers' narratives from a gender perspective and develops several recommendations which SPP may use in assisting women farmers.

² This definition is taken from the FAO website, <http://www.fao.org/spsfs/en/>

³ Raj Patel (2009) points out, for example, that food security can exist even in coercive circumstances – e.g. in a prison, a dictatorial regime, or a patriarchal state. Thus, “[u]nder food security, the question of power in the food system never comes up – as long as access is guaranteed under some system or other, there's no problem”.



SECTION 1:
A CRITIQUE OF FOOD & LAND REFORM
POLICIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

SECTION 1: A CRITIQUE OF FOOD & LAND REFORM POLICIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

OVERVIEW

This section of the report presents an analysis of the South African government's food security strategy and its land reform policies. The analysis draws on two perspectives, namely a gendered analysis and the food sovereignty perspective. The **gendered analysis** recognizes the power imbalances and subsequent inequality which exists between women and men as a result of patriarchal social, cultural and political systems and practices. In applying a gendered analysis, the food security strategy and the land reform policies are closely examined to determine the extent to which they address or perpetuate discrimination against women. Thus in adopting a gendered analysis, priority is given to understanding the impact of adopted strategies and policies on the lives of women. The **food sovereignty perspective** is founded on the "right of people to define their own food, agriculture, livestock and fisheries systems".⁴ In practice, this entails the right to participate in policymaking around the production, regulation, and distribution of food. Moreover, policymaking processes should ideally be egalitarian and democratic. The concept of food sovereignty considers the characteristics of food systems integral to any analysis of how food is accessed. Furthermore, it explicitly condemns the realisation of the right of access to food under unjust circumstances because the recognition of any rights under such systems is essentially arbitrary, i.e. rights are recognised due to the beneficence of the more powerful parties and can be revoked at any moment. They are not realised as the result of a democratic process based on mass involvement in decisions about political, economic and social outcomes. In a "sovereign food system", however, "a range of competing concerns around public space are balanced at appropriate levels, and ... food is treated not as a commodity but as a right" (Patel 2009).

One of the most distinctive aspects of food sovereignty is this emphasis on the rights of vulnerable groups to actively shape their food systems, instead of being shaped by them. In relation to women, food sovereignty is thus important because policies informed by this approach would ensure that women are central in decision-making around food and agricultural production, i.e. that they are central in the democratisation of food systems and that they increase the autonomy of women farmers vis-à-vis men as well as the state.

In applying this dual analysis, it becomes evident that South Africa's food strategy and land policies are fundamentally problematic in at least four respects: (1) Land and food policies are conceived as entirely separate policy areas and the links between them are unclear; (2) Land and food policies are based on an inadequate conception of gender⁵ as a barrier to accessing land, productive resources, and food; (3) They identify no specific mechanisms or interventions that will put into practice their normative commitment to gender equality; and (4) They are premised on the assumption that poverty and socio-economic inequality can be alleviated by increased access to markets in land and food.

IN BRIEF: LAND REFORM POLICY IN SOUTH AFRICA

From as early as 1913, South African legislation systematically stripped black South Africans of their rights to own, reside on and cultivate land. Consequently, land reform has been viewed by the government as integral to bringing about a more equitable and just society and economy.

⁴ Food sovereignty is a concept that was first developed in 1996 by Via Campesina, an international movement of "peasants, small- and medium-sized producers, landless, rural women, indigenous people, rural youth, and agricultural workers".

The White Paper on South African Land Policy (ANC 1997) was the first document to officially map out the ANC government's approach to land reform. It consists of three components: land restitution, land redistribution and tenure reform.

- Land restitution focuses on restoring ownership of land to persons who were dispossessed of it on racial grounds or providing them with just and equitable redress for their losses.
- Land redistribution focuses on the redistribution of 30% white-owned commercial agricultural land by 2014 through the provision of grants which facilitate the acquisition and development of land by black citizens.
- Tenure reform focuses on formalizing informal tenure rights and preventing private individuals or public agencies from arbitrarily evicting occupiers of land. Tenure reform laws aim to make land available for settlement and farming in rural and communal areas (Action Aid, 2009).⁶

In line with the White Paper, post-Apartheid land reform policies have been defined by a focus on formalizing tenure rights, eradicating racially skewed patterns of property rights in land, and ensuring the productive use of redistributed land for commercial production.⁷ The PLAS programme, for example, explicitly promotes redistribution of land for the benefit of middle class, commercially-oriented agricultural producers and uses "business-style" language to describe its objectives (Lahiff 2008, 35). Similarly LARP is aimed at improving the position of both farm dwellers and "new and existing Black Agribusiness entrepreneurs" (LARP 2008, 4) but with an emphasis on promoting commercial farming. Even the Communal Land Rights Act (2004) suggests that integration into the "mainstream legal system and economy" is one of the benefits of formalising tenure rights in areas administered by traditional authorities (DLA Umsebenzi Document 2005, 10).

Amongst these policies, LRAD is one of the few programmes that explicitly acknowledge the marginal status of women within the household and that encourages women to apply for grants independently of men. However, the programme contains no specific mechanisms that ensure equal outcomes for women. Furthermore, its emphasis on own contributions and commercial production implies that women will be effectively prevented from benefiting from this programme due to their socioeconomic position, preference for subsistence farming, and subjection to customary gender roles (Ikhdahl et al 2005, 62; Lahiff 2008, 34; Walker 2005, 303).

These policy interventions form part of a broader state-driven approach to development that places an obligation on the government to progressively realize the social and cultural rights of citizens while respecting existing property rights arrangements (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996). While these laws, policies and programmes have been created to respond to land reform, government has been criticized for developing policies and programmes which systematically overlook, and at times even sanction, sources of vulnerability other than race.

⁵ This report makes a distinction between sex and gender. Sex refers to the biological differences between men and women. Gender refers to socially constructed norms about the identities, behaviours, capacities and sexual orientations associated with male vs. female bodies. Gender, in other words, prescribes both masculine and feminine norms and limits the permissible behaviours and attitudes both women and men may display. Even though gender cannot be equated with women, many government agencies, including the Department of Land Affairs, think of "gender" as only affecting women (Walker 2005)

⁶ Tenure reform laws aim to make land available for settlement and farming in rural areas by formalising informal tenure arrangements. The implementation of these laws has affected women adversely. The two most important laws governing tenure reform are the Extension of Security of Tenure Act (ESTA) (1997) and the Land Reform (Labour Tenants) Act (LTA) (1996). Both the LTA and ESTA explicitly give women rights to occupy and use land regardless of their relationship to a male household member. Courts have nevertheless interpreted these laws in exactly the opposite terms, i.e. by stating that women's access to land depends on their relationship to male spouses or family members (Hall 2003).

⁷ The National Department of Land Affairs is responsible for conceptualising land reform laws and policies, and provincial and local governments are responsible for their implementation.



IN BRIEF: FOOD SECURITY POLICY IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africans are still struggling to overcome the legacies of Apartheid. The majority of black people continue to experience food insecurity despite food security obtaining attention at the national level, more especially through the social rights provisions contained in Chapter 2 of the Constitution⁸. The commodification of food, combined with South Africa's high poverty levels, forces poor citizens to spend disproportionate amounts of their income on food – or that they fail to purchase sufficient food altogether.

The government's Integrated Food Security Strategy for South Africa (2002) views Apartheid industrialisation and labour policies as the primary cause of food insecurity amongst impoverished black South Africans. It argues that "[m]odern industrial development" was the "driving force that created the contemporary poverty and food insecurity among black people in South Africa" because it led to a decline in their agricultural capital, wealth, farming and entrepreneurial skills. The "political and economic forces" associated with industrialisation "led blacks to become the expected providers of wage labour to mining, industry and large-scale agriculture". This ultimately undermined the food security of "African farmers and entrepreneurs [who had until then] successfully participated in the growing commodity markets" for food.

South Africa, like many other governments, develops its food policies with a view towards food security. The earliest policy statement on food security was contained in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP 1994), which identified food security as a basic human need. This framework was then refined in subsequent policy papers, specifically the Agriculture White Paper (DOA 1995), Agricultural Policy Discussion Document (DOA 1999) and the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP 1999). Following this, government launched its national food security strategy, the Integrated Food Security Strategy (IFSS), in 2000. This strategy grew out of a series of consultative engagement with a number of key players from both national and provincial spheres of government, as well as CBOs, NGOs, public agencies and universities (IFSS, 2000, pg 11). Subsequently, government also established a food security working group to research strategies for achieving food security.

⁸ Section 27 of the Constitution of South Africa (1996) states that "Everyone has the right to have access to ...sufficient food and water" and compels the state to "take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of each of these rights". In addition, Section 28 specifies that every child, i.e. persons younger than 18 years, has the right to basic nutrition.

The IFSS aims to improve the livelihoods of South Africans, particularly those who are vulnerable to food insecurity. The interventions laid out in the strategy aim to:

- Ensure that historically disadvantaged groups gain access to productive resources
- Ensure that groups who are unable to access resources are able to gain access to income and job opportunities so that they may purchase food
- Ensure that groups are empowered to make optimal choices for nutritious and safe food
- Ensure that government provides relief measures for those who are unable to access to food, either in the short or medium term
- Promote stakeholder engagement in creating food security
- Promote policy interventions related to food security, e.g. land reform, education and skills training, and production of food
- Strengthen information gathering and research capacity for the purposes of eradicating poverty and food insecurity (IFSS 2000, 5)

The government's emphasis on food security is criticised from a food sovereignty perspective as food security emphasizes people's access to food and disregards the circumstances in which people gain access to food. Therefore the food security strategy, while acknowledging that a right of access to food is necessary, fails to acknowledge or critically assess "questions of power" (Patel 2009). By ignoring these background conditions, it can neither identify, nor critique any exploitative practices or systematically unequal power relations that define food systems.

CRITIQUE

a) Conceptual Links Between Land Reform and Food Security Policies

Government's land reform and food security strategies are not particularly well integrated. The IFSS contains references to the land reform programme only in passing – for example when it notes land reform as an issue that will be addressed in the process of solving food insecurity, or when it identifies the DLA is a stakeholder in its food strategy.

However, the document contains no description of specific mechanisms or government programmes through which the redistribution of land and increased control over food systems will be linked. At most, the importance of land redistribution for food security is only alluded to in the list of "expected outcomes of the IFSS". The top two expected outcomes are "[g]reater ownership of productive assets and participation in the economy by the food insecure" and "[i]ncreased competitiveness and profitability of farming operations and rural enterprises that are owned and managed by or on behalf of the food insecure" (IFSS 2002, 10).

Land reform programmes exhibit a similar bias – particularly the newer generation support programmes like LARP, which was introduced as a response to the fragmented manner in which the LRAD and SLAG programmes were introduced. LARP is based on the premise that land redistribution, agrarian reform, and rural service delivery are interdependent. This view is echoed by the women farmers' narratives contained in this report. The service programmes associated with LARP, are ostensibly designed to promote the viability of small farming projects and in order to accelerate poverty eradication through job creation and economic growth. However the interventions promoted under LARP, like expecting potential beneficiaries to skills tests before assisting them, will likely benefit relatively skilled emerging farmers and entrepreneurs, as well as commercial farmers (Lahiff 2008). Furthermore, this programme is designed to promote food security at the national level – i.e. only in the most abstract sense of assisting farmers in producing food-as-commodity for the national and export markets – and not at the household or community level (e.g. through community gardens or subsistence farming projects).

b) Conceptualisation of Gender in Land Reform and Food Policies

Women continue to play a major role in the production, distribution and preparation of food. Despite this, they have little control over productive resources like land, farming equipment, livestock, or even seeds. One of the major reasons for this is that women are forced to carry out their roles as farmers under patriarchal gender systems, which deem women invisible or irrelevant, particularly in relation to commercial farming and/or farming with livestock.

Land reform and food security policies and programmes have not paid sufficient attention to these patriarchal structures which overwhelmingly contribute to women's inability to access productive resources. This is clearly demonstrated in the gender-neutral discussions of the food and land needs contained in these documents. Both food and land policies focus on the needs of households or "communities" (Walker 2005). However, they contain no analysis of intra-community and intra-household dynamics, and their impact on the accessing food and land.

The Integrated Food Security Strategy, for example, makes reference to the fact that nearly one third of all South African households are female-headed, and that they are considerably poorer than male-headed households (IFSS 2000, 23). Despite recognising this disparity, the strategy does not consider its origins, or its implications for the distribution of food, land and productive resources.⁹ It fails to analyse the special burdens placed on female-headed households in securing food, and does not specify how it will address the fact that women's access to productive resources – and by extensions food – is typically decided by or negotiated with the assistance of male relatives, spouses or community members.

Furthermore, neither land reform nor food security programmes consider the fact that women, in many cases, do not have decision-making power within households or governance structures because tradition and culture stipulate that men fulfil this role. One of the major problems with the food strategy is that its interventions are aimed at ensuring the food security of "households" and that it treats these units as neutral and undifferentiated. It does not differentiate between the capacities of different types of households – e.g. male vs. female-headed, employed household members vs. unemployed, households subsisting off subsidies vs. those subsisting off income – to access food on their preferred terms.

In addition to its failure to recognise inequalities in power and authority within the household, the strategy does not recognise the different food needs of men and women. Walker (2005, 306) points out that land reform policies fail to improve women's position partly because they fail to "[think] through when and in what way policy interventions should target women or men as distinct social groups, and when they should not". Additionally, there is a "lack of realism about the limited impact that single project interventions can have on multi-faceted social relationships", through which gender norms are produced and maintained (Walker 2005, 307).

Such oversights are a product of the gender neutral approach used to devise the food security strategy set out in the report. One of the most striking consequences of this approach is the disembodied manner in which "food insecure" people are described.

⁹ For example, the strategy does not identify or address the reasons why female-headed households are systematically poorer than male-headed households, nor how this might affect their access to food. In relation to mixed-sex households, it fails to acknowledge the inferior position women often occupy in relation to men at the household-level, and how this might undermine their food security and that of their children. Finally, the strategy pays no mind to the fact that women are typically burdened with the role of providing food in mixed sex households. Where food is difficult to obtain, and where obtaining it remains a women's responsibility, negotiating access to food takes up significant amounts of women's time and unpaid labour. Men generally escape such obligations.



The report does not specify who these people are, their geographical locations, how their needs will be addressed, or how their food needs are related to specific bodily characteristics such as their sex, age, health status or reproductive status (e.g. Are these food insecure individuals pregnant, Breastfeeding, etc?). It also fails to explain how food insecure people that are not farmers will gain access to income-generating resources or subsidies that allow them to purchase nutritious food.

A second example of the limited attention paid to gender can be found in the IFSS' analysis of the historical sources of food insecurity in South Africa. The document is no doubt correct in arguing that Apartheid policies forced black men out of agriculture and into exploitative wage-labour in the industrial, mining and commercial agriculture sectors. However, it completely ignores the impact of these policies on women and their control over food systems and land. No mention is made of the impact of the Bantustan system, which forcibly relocated black people to labour reserves located on non-arable land, on women subsistence farmers. It fails to take into account the impact of Apartheid and post-Apartheid policies of governing rural areas through patriarchal customary laws, which historically denied women rights of ownership to land, on women farmers.¹⁰

In short, the government's food security strategy is primarily concerned with the long term impact of Apartheid policies on the occupational patterns of black men – and by extension, their impact on the limited control that black male farmers have over agricultural land and commercial agriculture in the post-Apartheid period. In this context, food security is essentially defined as a by-product of black male entrepreneurs' access to and ownership of land and related productive resources.

Aside from problems with the conceptualisation and implementation of land reform policies, empirical research also shows that women are often not aware of, or knowledgeable about the extent of, their land rights. In some regions, women were aware of their rights but were not able to claim these rights due to their marital status or because they are in communities ruled by customary law in matters relating to property rights (Action Aid, 2009).

¹⁰ For a concise overview of women's access to and control over land and their participation in farming activities under Apartheid see Ikdahl et al (2005, 59).

c) Absence of Mechanisms Promoting Gender Equality

Land reform and food security policies address gender equality primarily by promising to improve policy outcomes for women, or by stating that gender equality should be a guiding principle of policy. Such normative and declarative sentiments recognize the secondary position of women, yet do very little to transform it (Walker 2005, 305).

National policies and programmes promoting food security and land reform contain few specific mechanisms for realizing and monitoring women's ownership of agricultural land, nor for increasing their control over food systems. Neither the DLA nor the Department of Agriculture, for example, collect statistics that accurately disaggregate the impact of land reform and agricultural support policies by sex. Furthermore, land reform policies describe no mechanisms for transforming gendered norms about women's roles in agriculture and land ownership. More broadly, they fail to specify practical interventions that address mainstream culture and traditional systems which promote gender norms that constrain women's control and access to productive resources. Policies that do not correct such imbalances, or acknowledge their limitations in this regard, are likely to reinforce the dominant position of men in general – and by extension their capacity to benefit disproportionately from land reform and food security policies.

d) Market-Based Solutions to Poverty and Inequality

Both land redistribution and food security are understood as "priority" problem areas that are best solved through market mechanisms. Thus, food security and land reform policies have a pro-market bias, i.e. they assume that poverty can be alleviated and quality of life improved primarily by increasing poor people's access to property rights, cash income and commercial markets. The commodification of land and food, in other words, and the exchange of these goods on mass- rather than local markets, are not seen as fundamental sources of vulnerability. This way of approaching access to food is a direct result of governments focus on food security, which emphasises increasing the availability of food in the country, rather than an emphasis on food sovereignty.

For example the IFSS identifies "[matching] incomes of people to prices in order to ensure access to sufficient food for every citizen" (IFSS 2002, 5-6) as one of its key challenges in addressing food insecurity. Its top two strategic objectives for eradicating "hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity" by 2015 are "[increasing] household food production and trading" and "[improving] income generation and job creation opportunities" (IFSS 2002, 6; my emphasis). Better access to the market – and increased income levels to participate more effectively in these markets – are thus understood as the primary mechanisms for solving food insecurity.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

With alarmingly high levels of poverty and unemployment, many South Africans have neither food security, nor food sovereignty. This is especially true for female-headed households. Many citizens depend on state resources, e.g. social grants or pensions, to supplement their cash income and to purchase food. Government's social welfare policies, its food security strategy, and its land reform policies signal a sincere commitment to assisting vulnerable groups that wish to own land and purchase food. However, these policies do not elaborate mechanisms that diminish the impact of skewed gender relations and tend to perpetuate dependency on both the state and the market.

Given that women's access to land and productive resources remains tenuous, government must revisit existing land reform and food security policies. One way of doing so would be to create policies centred on the idea of food sovereignty, which emphasizes that all people have the right to food-producing resources and the means to sustain themselves. Such an approach is particularly important for women, because it demands that women have rights to access and control productive resources. It is an approach which prioritises vulnerable groups' wellbeing and ensures that they have a right to define their own food or agriculture systems.

SECTION 2: FINDINGS



SECTION 2: FINDINGS

OVERVIEW

The information presented in this section was taken from interviews with women farmers from six different farming projects. Four of the projects are located in the Northern Cape (in Nababeep, Calvinia, Garries, Loeriesfontein) and two in the Western Cape (Porterville, Elandsbaai). Background information on the projects is provided in the box below. Three of the projects only have women members, and three of the projects are mixed group projects (i.e. women and men). Interviews were only conducted with women, as SPP wished to prioritise women's narratives of the obstacles they face in accessing and using farm land. No interviews were done with local government officials, representatives of national government departments or male members of mix-sexed farming projects.

BOX: BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON FARMING PROJECTS

WOMEN ONLY GROUP PROJECTS		
Loeriesfontein, Northern Cape: An initiative which started in 2006 and aimed to produce organic vegetables in order to sell at affordable prices to the community, thus making fresh organic produce accessible. The farming occurs on municipal-owned land.	Elandsbaai, Western Cape: An initiative started in 2001 which focused on pig farming as a means to overcome poverty and exploitation. The farming occurs on municipal-owned land.	Garries, Northern Cape: An initiative started in 2002 which focused on both livestock and vegetable farming. Livestock was for their personal use & vegetable farming for purposes of providing food to the community. The farming occurs on municipal-owned land. Started as a mixed group project, however, men have since left and now it is a women only project.
MIXED GROUP (WOMEN AND MEN) PROJECTS		
Nadabeep, Northern Cape: An initiative, which started in 2000 and focuses on involving women in the community to produce crops in household gardens. Most of the women farm on land which they own. Group comprises of 25 people with more men than women (exact amounts were not stipulated).	Porterville, Western Cape: An initiative which involves women and men, started in 2004 and focuses on cultivating the land for the purpose of growing and selling flowers as well as selling livestock in order to generate income for themselves and their families. The organisation also donates sheep to soup kitchens which are run at schools in the area. The farming occurs on municipal-owned land Group comprises of equal numbers of women and men (18 members).	Calvinia, Northern Cape: An initiative which started in 2001 which is involved in livestock farming in order to enable women in the community to generate an income for themselves. The farming occurs on municipal-owned land. Group comprises of 1 woman and 7 men.

The information obtained from respondents is arranged thematically, and concentrates on the meaning of land in the lives of these women and the obstacles they face in accessing it. Illustrative quotes are included throughout the text.

A: Women and Farming: Significance, roles and responsibilities

- Farming as a survival strategy
- Decision-making & authority
- Farming and "women's work"

B: Accessing & Cultivating Land

- Struggles to access and keep land
- Obstacles to cultivating land

C: Support from the Private and Public Sector

- Experiences
- Expectations

D: Reflections of emerging women farmers

- Distinguishing characteristics of successful farming projects
- Gender relations farming projects

* * *

A: WOMEN & FARMING: SIGNIFICANCE, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Farming as a survival strategy

Respondents from the women only and mixed groups indicated that in the context of high levels of unemployment and poverty, women ultimately depend on farming for the survival and cohesion of their families. A large number of women indicated that the main purpose or goal of their farming is to eradicate poverty and generate income. The women all stated that the income generated through farming enables them to provide not only for themselves and their families, but also for others in their respective communities, who are in need. In one of the mixed groups, the women expressed that the purpose of their project is to access land for the underprivileged women and to use the project as a means to get more women involved in order to generate an income for themselves. Respondents from both the women only groups and the mixed groups shared that they address community needs either by selling livestock and vegetables to community members or by donating items to soup kitchens.

"The produce that is generated on the farm is sold to the community and on markets; it is also donated to the sick and to families that have experienced death in their families"; "...intentions are to give 10% of their profits to the HIV clinics and the crèches in the community".

Several women indicated that in addition to the high levels of unemployment, their frustration regarding the exploitation many people in the community experienced at the hands of commercial farmers also prompted their involvement in these small scale farming initiatives. "There is no work in the area and the youth have to work on farms away from home and they are being underpaid by the farmers."

Decision-making & authority

In addressing the question of decision making regarding the management of farming projects, the responses from women in the women only groups as well as in mixed groups ranged from consultative processes involving everyone one to decisions being made individually.



The nuances of power dynamics which emerged in the groups differed significantly between the women only groups and the mixed groups.

Women associated with the women only groups, revealed that as they are involved in the farming, they make the decisions about what to farm and how the land is managed. However, in the instance where the skill levels differed, the women shared that the most skilled person was afforded the authority for making the final decision regarding the management of the farming process, even though the other group members have undergone training.

Women associated with the mixed groups, stated that they were involved in consultative processes as the practice of the groups are to involve all members, including discussions regarding what to farm and the financial components of the project. "The decisions concerning the different activities on the farm are made by all the people involved in the project. They meet at least three times a month and discuss what needs to be done".

However, upon further engagement with the issue of decision making in mixed groups, there were women who revealed that often, when farming on municipal-owned land, men assumed greater authority in the decision-making processes. The women elaborated through examples of how decisions which the group made were the ones presented by men, as women generally did not offer proposals.

Further illustrations of men assuming more authority in mixed groups were provided in descriptions of how meetings with other stakeholders were led by men while women assumed the role of 'silent supporters'. "The men led the process but the whole group accompanied them to the meeting so that the municipality could see that they were enough to manage the land successfully". Women from one of the mixed groups also shared that women in the group would come together and conduct an assessment of their needs, and then approach the men in the group who would then decide whether women could access the necessary resources required.

Farming and "women's work"

The respondents reflected that both women and men are involved in farming however the type of farming and the exact responsibilities which women and men fulfil often differ. In both women only and mixed groups, there was acknowledgment of women's involvement in vegetable farming as well as livestock farming. From the mixed groups, however, some women expressed that with livestock farming although both women and men are involved, their responsibilities which they fulfil differs. "Most men work with the livestock. Both men and women work with the wheat and with the medical care of livestock. Women work with the cultivation of the plants".

B: ACCESSING & CULTIVATING LAND

Struggles to access and keep land

Women respondents from five of the six projects indicated that the land on which they farm is municipal-owned land, whereas in only one of the projects (a mixed project) did women state that they farm on land which they personally own. Based on the experiences which the women shared, it became evident that the reality of farming on municipal land presents with several challenges which include the timely and complicated process of acquiring land as well as the insecurity associated with the use of municipal land.

The women revealed that in acquiring 'leasing' rights from the municipality they were required to arrange and engage in several meetings with relevant persons at the municipal offices, including the mayor. As these processes were unfamiliar and intimidating, the women confirmed that their projects needed assistance either from SPP or in the form of group support together with a more informed group member.

As a result of these forms of assistance and persistence throughout the process, the women reflected that their projects were able to secure 'leasing' rights for varying lengths of time. Two of the groups revealed that they were able to lease the land for a period of two years and another group indicated that they were able to lease the land for a period of nine and a half years.

In relating the length of time for which they were able to access the land, the women also shared that none of the agreements which they have with the municipality involved written documentation or formal proof confirming these arrangements. As a result of only having entered into verbal agreements, several women (from women only and mixed groups) expressed concern regarding their security as farmers. While they all indicated that they would re-apply once the leasing period expired, several women stated that they were unsure whether their renewals would be approved. Women from one of the projects (woman only project) mentioned that the land on which they are farming is part of a land claims matter and that their future, once the lands claim is resolved, is unclear. Even though some women provided possible strategies which would hopefully secure their access to the land, for example continuing to use the land productively¹¹ and not contravening any of the municipality's laws and regulations, the manner in which these were expressed reflected the uncertainty and fear which are part of the reality facing these farmers.

In addition to the expressed fear of not having access to the land once the existing lease agreements expire, women articulated that they were unaware of what processes they would need to follow if they lost the land. The women mentioned that as they lacked the knowledge of the relevant steps which they would need to undertake they would undoubtedly approach SPP for assistance. "We do not know which processes we have to follow to keep the land if there is a threat that it can be taken away; we depend on the support of SPP". Women also attributed their lack of knowledge of these processes as a reflection of the inefficiency on the part of the municipality who have failed to offer them the necessary information and support.

¹¹ A condition for accessing municipal land is the continued productive use of land. The extent to which farmers leasing municipal land are using the land productively is monitored, and there are cases where the municipality has taken land away from beneficiaries because they had used the land to its full potential.

Obstacles to cultivating land

A condition attached to the leasing of municipal land for productive use is that the land must be optimally utilized, "*It they do not use the land productively, there is a strong possibility that the land can be taken away from them*". This is a huge concern to the women farmers as they are faced with social and environmental challenges which hamper effective use of the land.

The women shared that they do not have access to financial resources to enable them to invest in agriculture, for example to buy equipment or put up fencing to protect their livestock and crops. Women also indicated that the ability to farm is severely hampered by water shortages. For example, women in the Northern Cape stated that the lack of adequate supply of water prevents them from planting trees as a protective barrier in order to protect their pig farm. "*They would like to plant trees around the piggery to protect it from the strong South-Easter wind but because their pump is not working they are forced to use municipal water but this is very expensive and thus prevents them from planting the protective barrier of trees*".

The lack of basic infrastructure was another obstacle which women identified. Specific mention was made of the negative impact of the high transportation costs and the absence of roads. Women provided examples of how they are limited to selling produce locally because they cannot afford the transportation costs which would allow access to markets where they can offer competitive prices. Women from the Western Cape explained that due to the lack of roads leading to the area where they farm livestock, they have to spend a significant amount of money paying workers to carry water and feed for their livestock.

C: SUPPORT FROM THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTOR

Emerging women farmers identified that the support which they require includes information and advice, financial support to acquire equipment and address infrastructure challenges, as well as being directly provided with the actual equipment and assistance to prevent evictions. These women farmers, from both women only and mixed groups, spoke about their experiences relating to the support which they have received and also shared some thoughts on ways in which the support offered to women farmers can be improved.

Experiences

Non-governmental & community-based organisations:

Women from both women-only and mixed groups have reportedly received varying forms of support with the main source of support being SPP. SPP was identified as being the most accessible organisation to these women farmers and the primary means whereby the women received advice and information especially when they have to deal with or approach their municipalities. The women revealed that within their communities, no other civil society organisation provides them with support. They expressed that there is a need for existing Advice Offices to provide support to all emerging farmers and to assist them in communications with the municipality.

Local municipalities

Municipalities were identified as another important source of support for emerging women farmers. However, when referring to the support provided by municipalities, the women farmers had mixed responses. Some women mentioned that the kind of support they receive from the municipality is limited, while others indicated that they receive a lot of support from the municipality.



"They have received a lot of help from the municipality in the form of assistance when they need to burn their field".

"The local municipality does not pay enough attention to the needs of the local emerging farmers and they do not provide them with enough support, especially for women".

Several women also highlighted that the municipality fails to provide them with information or advice concerning their projects, thus women farmers have inadequate knowledge of policies and official procedures and are unable to apply for and qualify for assistance. A further frustration which women expressed was in relation to the slow administrative processes within the municipality as this also hampers their access to necessary support. Some women sketched the following example,

"The municipality can provide R15 000 to an SPP initiated farming project, however as the release of these funds have not yet been approved by the municipality, the project cannot access the money, therefore utilise it for much needed infrastructure."

Government departments

Various government departments were also identified as being a source of support to emerging women farmers, namely the Department of Agriculture, Department of Land Affairs, Department of Social Development, Department of Water Affairs and Forestry. The type of support women farmers received from government departments was primarily in the form of farming equipment and seeds. *"The Department of Agriculture also provided them with solar panels to help with the generation of power for the water pumps"*. However, as with the municipality, women farmers criticised government for providing them with inadequate support.

A criticism which women levelled at these government departments as well as at local municipalities was that they were not accessible. Several women indicated that they often find it difficult to communicate with the department and do not have the money for transportation to access the relevant municipal and/or government offices.

Commercial farmers

Surrounding commercial farmers were also noted as being a useful resource, although the majority of women stated that the support was not frequently provided. A group who had received support from commercial farmers shared the following, *"The commercial farmers donate a lot of goods to their project that helped the emerging farmers build up the infrastructure on the farm. One of the commercial farmers donated a bakkie"*.

Expectations

Several expectations were raised during discussions on how to ensure greater support to emerging women farmers. Besides expressing the need for more locally based non-governmental and community-based organisations to assist emerging women farmers in engaging with government officials, the expectations raised, centred on local municipalities/ government as well as on commercial farmers and local businesses. The women provided some proposals of ways in which these identified stakeholders can be more supportive towards them.

Local Municipalities and government

The most central issue on which the participating women commented was the need for local municipalities as well as provincial and national government to build trusting relationships with emerging women farmers. Irrespective of whether women described relationships with government as positive or negative, there was an overwhelming sense of frustration and disappointment regarding government's commitment towards women farmers. The women identified that government was not responding to the reality that evictions are occurring and a threat to the livelihoods of women farmers and their families. They proposed that government can provide support to emerging women farmers by "*...develop(ing) a law that prohibits evictions from farms and that protects emerging farmers like them*". Several women also stated that government is not honest with them and fails to fulfil promises which they make. In the Western Cape, women indicated that the "*government must stop lying*" when it comes to their responsibilities as well as their promises. Some women indicated that "*last year they were told to apply for farms since this would be cheaper than raising pigs. There were about 103 applications but only five were successful and they were all white farmers.*" Women stated that the department of Land Affairs did not even inform those that were not successful nor why they were not able to access the land. "*It seems to me government is fooling the people around*".

The lack of communication between local municipalities and national government was also identified as a barrier to providing adequate support to emerging women farmers. Women from the Northern Cape indicated that they often find that national government is not always aware of the challenges facing women farmers, thus not monitoring the services being provided to them and holding local government accountable. The women proposed that there is more communication between the municipality and relevant national government structures, specifying that "*The government must communicate with the municipality, the government must give the municipality direct and clear orders concerning the help they must provide to emerging farmers.*" The women also indicated that, "*it is the responsibility of national government to send officials to come and see what the needs of these emerging farmers are.*"

Several women also stated that the local government structures must provide emerging women farmers with opportunities to build their capacity as farmers, "*Government must provide workshops or send us on exchange programmes so that we can learn from emerging farmers in other countries*".

Commercial farmers and local businesses

Many of the women farmers also reflected on the need for them to collaborate with local businesses, the local community as well as to establish relationships with commercial farmers. The emerging women farmers identified these role-players as key in enabling them to create sustainable farming projects, stating that "*...it is the responsibility of local businesses to help the emerging farmers and in turn, it is the responsibility of the emerging farmers to sell to the businesses and promote the businesses in their community.*" Several women stated that the support which they would find most beneficial from commercial farmers is advice and provision of equipment such as tractors.



Some women also indicated that they would like commercial farmers to provide emerging farmers access to part of their land and proposed that the assistance received from commercial farmers could involve, "...the commercial farmers loan(ing) the emerging farmer a number of livestock and when the livestock has paired and multiplied then the emerging farmer can return the initial amount of livestock to the commercial farmer."

D: REFLECTIONS OF EMERGING WOMEN FARMERS

Distinguishing characteristics of successful farming projects

When asked to reflect on other known projects involving emerging women farmers, the participants indicated that the challenges in accessing land as well as the social and environmental challenges which they highlighted are a common reality facing emerging farmers. In reflecting on the way in which their own projects differ from other known farming projects, the women stated that emerging farmers who have successful projects owe their success to the fact that they are either more educated thus not intimidated to engage in meetings/discussions, have access to more funding thus able to obtain the relevant equipment and infrastructure, or receive greater levels of support from their municipalities and commercial farmers.

None of the participants provided further details (name and location) of projects deemed to be successful.

Gender relations in farming projects

The women were asked to reflect on the relationship between women and men in terms of the dynamics which emerged in groups as well as the access to opportunities. With regard to group dynamics, women, whether from the women only groups or mixed groups, indicated that power struggles emerged resulting in secrecy regarding funding and a failure to work together in order to be supportive towards each other.

In determining whether there are any marked distinctions in terms of the support which women only and mixed groups received, the opinions varied. In the women only groups, women felt that the kind of support (and struggles they were experiencing) were the same as that of mixed groups. However, women from mixed groups felt that men receive more support than women. The reasons for these expressed feelings were not elaborated.

Through the introduction of discussions on gender relations, what became apparent was that women felt undermined and undervalued by men. Women involved in mixed group projects stated that the men tend to underestimate female leadership and/or resent being led by a woman. They added that women are excluded from project planning processes. While some women mentioned that there are men who support women, the overwhelming opinion was that women generally do not receive a lot of help from the men in the community, with references such as "*They keep you on the floor*" and "*Males underestimate what women can do*". Women in women only farming projects echoed these feelings and stated that men oppress women because they are of the perception that they can do the work better than women. Women further mentioned being aware of the involvement of women in mixed group projects being limited and that in projects started by men, the ideas of women are often dismissed.

With regard to the ability to farm, women acknowledged that they find it difficult doing the hard physical labour and stated that "*Male farmers can do the hard labour themselves while other women have to pay labourers to do the hard work*". However, this factor in no way influenced the perception women had of their ability as farmers. Women mentioned that "*they do not feel that there is anything that the men can do that the women cannot do. All that they need is to be taught how to do the jobs that are usually done by the men. It all depends on your knowledge*". In fact, women readily identified the strengths which they bring to farming projects, namely their perseverance and ability to manage the many facets of a project.

SECTION 3: ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATIONS

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OVERVIEW

The existing land reform policies and food security strategy each articulate government's commitment to address past injustices and overcome poverty facing millions of South Africans. However, these policies and strategy are not only problematic in terms of their conceptualisation (as indicated in section 1: literature review) but also in terms of the translation into practice. Implementation of the policies and strategy reveal a distancing from the expressed commitment and intentions. Despite glimmers of hope in terms of the provision of ad hoc support, the most common reality is that emerging women farmers, their families and their communities are locked into poverty. Ensuring that emerging women farmers have access to productive resources thus requires interventions which not only address some practical barriers to access but also which challenges the patriarchal systems and institutions as well as their related policies and strategies.

ANALYSIS

The situation in which emerging women farmers find themselves demonstrates the disjuncture in the interplay between the reality facing poor women and government's response to address poverty, all of which occurs within a broader patriarchal social and political context in which institutions and practices effectively exclude and render women, their needs and their contribution to the family, community and society, invisible.

For women emerging farmers, the impact of this interplay is experienced in a number of ways, namely:

Gender blindness: Emerging women farmers present their involvement in farming projects in relation to their care-giving roles towards the family and community. The fact that they have to assume multiple roles, continue to be subjected to barriers in accessing land and becoming independent as well as the devaluing of their contribution is not something with which these women critically engage. A possible explanation for the lack of critical engagement could be attributed to the fact that the discrimination which women experience is normalised to such an extent that women collude in their own oppression. Thus, the consideration that they too can own land and have authority over land is not something which registers within the reality in which women operate. Another possible explanation for the absence of critical engagement is that women have made a purposeful decision to accept their circumstances because the consequences of challenging it will alienate them further, resulting in the limited support systems which currently exist (i.e. family and community) also becoming inaccessible.

False hope and unrealistic expectations: the commitment expressed in the policies and strategy has created a false sense of hope within poor communities, particularly among the most vulnerable that through utilising the opportunities presented, communities can alleviate poverty. However, due to the failure to understand and prioritise women's needs in relation to the broader context which perpetuates women's powerlessness, the conceptualisation of the land reform policies and food security strategy has merely perpetuated the discrimination which women face. The powerlessness of emerging women farmers is exacerbated and maintained through the implementation of ineffective policies and strategy which fail to ensure that women have access to information and the necessary resources as well as opportunities to build their capacity. In the absence of understanding the nuanced way in which powerlessness is being perpetuated within patriarchal systems, the emerging women farmers thus have the unrealistic expectation that the change they desire is attainable on the basis of few small interventions. More specifically, emerging women farmers appear to believe that if they have the relevant support given to them, then they can farm and they will no longer find themselves impoverished.



Silenced activism: Emerging women farmers generally do not own land and have limited or indirect access to land. The authority of emerging women farmers in relation to the farming process and the produce from their farming is tempered and restricted at various stages. Despite these barriers and constraints which confront women, they are largely uncritical (gender blind) and undemanding. The successful way in which women have been disempowered is evident in the lack of political consciousness among these emerging women farmers. The consequence thereof is that women are not challenging the discrimination to which they are being subjected, they are not collectively organising and instituting actions to ensure their voices are heard. Instead, through gender blindness and operating with false hope and unrealistic expectations, women individually and collectively are silenced, thus make no demands for change.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The collective impact of the afore-mentioned ways in which emerging women farmers experience this interplay contributes to the devastating consequence of locking women and subsequently, their families and communities, into poverty. Addressing the dire situation in which emerging women farmers find themselves requires varied interventions levelled at government institutions, local service providers as well as emerging women farmers and the community at large. The emerging women farmers who participated in this research presented some proposals of the way in which government and other local service providers can assist them in attaining access to productive resources (see Findings and Box 1 below). These proposed interventions, while necessary, are insufficient to bring about a shift in the position in which emerging women farmers find themselves as they only target government and local service providers.

BOX 1:

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING ACCESS OF EMERGING WOMEN FARMERS TO PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES.

Emerging women farmers from selected projects in the Western Cape and Northern Cape recommended that government take the following practical steps in supporting their farming projects:

1. Provision of material resources such as:

- Land, water, farming equipment, fencing & funding
- Infrastructure

2. Provision or improvement of government services such as:

- Providing women farmers with technical assistance, e.g. with drought relief
- Offering training opportunities for women farmers
- Sending women on exchange programmes so they can learn from others in the industry

3. Improving the accountability and participatory orientation of public institutions by:

- Paying attention to the specific needs of emerging women farmers
- Establishing a good relationship between women and government
- Reserving seats for women representatives on district councils
- Making clear commitments to women farmers and fulfilling them
- Encouraging field-visits by government officials to farming areas, for the purposes of directly assessing the needs of women farmers
- Developing a law that protects emerging farmers farming on land subject to land claims, and that offers better protection against evictions from farms
- Linking women with existing farming unions in order to gain experience in unionising and more familiarity with issues confronted by other people working in the sector

4. Facilitating collaboration with key stakeholders such as:

- Local commercial farmers
- Key government departments
- Local businesses, banks and local communities
- Farming unions
- Advice offices

Strategic interventions to bring about a real shift in women's position and ultimately, ensuring access of emerging women farmers to productive resources, are required. Thus, developing such interventions requires careful consideration of the following questions:

Are the needs and experiences of emerging women farmers thoroughly understood?

The current research provides some initial information, however, it is necessary that a deeper exploration into emerging women farmers' perceptions and experiences is undertaken to ensure that the nuances and complexity of their difficult circumstances is captured and thoroughly understood so that the interventions formulated are relevant to the needs of women

NOTE:

The detailed documentation of the perceptions and experiences of emerging women farmers requires the information-gatherer to have a sound understanding of feminism as well as skills in gender analysis and participatory story-telling methods.

How can raising women's political awareness of their situation be beneficial for these emerging women farmers?

In order to bring about improvement in women's circumstances, women themselves have to be agents of change. However, the first step towards effecting change is consciousness-raising. Based on the circumstances and the depth of women's silence, it is necessary to devise methods of engagement which is related to the provision of support which is responsive to the immediate needs of emerging women farmers. Through the process of providing support and building relationships with women, questions can be raised which facilitate women's critical thinking of discriminatory practices and experiences which they endure.

NOTE:

The development and implementation of awareness raising strategies relating to the politics of women's position requires subtle approaches which are empowering, rather than threatening for women and raise issues with which women can relate. Trainers and fieldworkers therefore also need to have a sound understanding of feminism as well as skills in gender analysis and participatory methods.

How can ongoing implementation of ineffective policies and strategies be addressed so that emerging women farmers benefit?

Existing policies and strategies relating to land reform and food security have been continually criticised, yet remain. The implementation of these policies and strategies has also been wrought with problems which have not abated. A far more aggressive and consistent approach to challenging these policies and strategies is required. Thus there is a great need to engage with local activists and other key role-players in order to build local institutions as a way of facilitating ongoing activism to promote a culture of government accountability to women.

NOTE:

A clear understanding of the support required to sustain local level activism is essential.

What alternative strategies will ensure benefits for emerging women farmers?

The food sovereignty perspective gives recognition to the power imbalances within contexts and is geared towards shifting these so that there is equality. However, the way in which this perspective (and any others which are developed) must be critically examined to determine the practical implications and feasibility for emerging women farmers. For example, in shifting orientation towards the food sovereignty perspective, practically how feasible is it for women, within traditional contexts, to access and make decisions regarding land?

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