Following political developments late last year and the coming in of a new administration, the policymakers are now transforming the initial policy pronouncements into actual policies relating to the land reforms of the 2000s and the principle that the land tenure was unlawful. The country finds itself at a critical juncture going into the future, considering the economic aspirations of the “new dispensation”, vis-à-vis the land tenure security and access by smallholders, including women farmers, for optimal agricultural production. Land ownership and management of the resource for national stability and sustained economic recovery.

Concurrent with these policy pronouncements regarding land and tenure, the country has “Zimbabwe is open for business” mantra of the “new dispensation”.

In the current quest to attract foreign investment by the new administration, many African countries are extending the possibility of access to formal freehold land tenure. Notable examples include the land policy reforms aiming at individual registration and titling of land. To date, over two dozen African countries have proposed de jure land law reforms that are extending the possibility of access to formal freehold land tenure, and are also addressing land use-related conflicts in resettlement areas.

Policy recommendations

The state-based non-alienable permit system for A1 farmers and the leasehold system for the A2 farmers must remain the appropriate land tenure systems to sustain the land tenure security of smallholders, particularly women farmers, and reduce related land conflicts. The government must harmonise the Agricultural Lands Act and the Mineral Acts by developing guidelines on the rights of landowners and mineral rights holders to counter framer/miner displacement of the peasantry. A recent national survey by the Sam Moyo African Institute of Agrarian Studies (SMAIAS, 2014) shows that women own 50% of the land in the country.

Synchronise statutory and customary land tenure laws to ensure the land tenure legal framework in land governance and administration in both communal and resettlement areas to strengthen women’s land tenure security in the context of marriage, inheritance and divorce or separation. At the same time, encourage registration of marriages, divorces and deaths enhancing expectation of an equitable division of land among spouses and those under the A1 resettlement model. Furthermore, establishment of a national land bank to provide agricultural funding should be prioritised.

The state needs to firstly develop a robust land tenure evaluation model that takes into account issues such as unpaid land rents and those under the A1 resettlement model.

Policy recommendations

1. On compensation, the state needs to firstly develop a robust land tenure evaluation model that takes into account issues such as unpaid land rents, and those under the A1 resettlement model.

2. Furthermore, establishment of a national land bank to provide agricultural funding should be prioritised.

3. On land tenure, it is recommended that the Government of Zimbabwe finalises the implementation of its policy of issuing permits for the A1 farms and 99-year leases for the A2 sector while also negotiating with former white farmers on the land tenure model. Among the identified factors constraining optimal agricultural production are low access to agricultural inputs and the low utilisation of certified credit which remains below twenty percent, low levels of mechanisation with tractor ownership below twenty percent, slow process of implementation of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) and high eviction, particularly in the resettlement areas (SMAIAS, 2014). The new administration has exhorted to show their deservedness by demonstrating policies relating to the land reforms of the 2000s and that the principle of affirmative action for the smallholder farmers and particularly women.”

For the complete policy brief authored by Freedom Mazwi, Newman land improvements made.

A Focus on Land Tenure Issues

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