**POST INDEPENDENCE LAND POLICIES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: IMPROVING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY AND VALUE CHAINS FOR EXPORT**

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| 1Department of Architecture and Real Estate, cmchavunduka@yahoo.com¹, University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe.  ²Department of Architecture and Real Estate, mchivenge17@gmail.com², University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe. | ***ABSTRACT***  **Context and background**  Land is one of the key enablers in the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area and produces a significant percentage of agricultural commodities that get traded. Despite the attainment of independence and implementation of land reform programmes; poverty, inequality and unemployment have endured in the former settler colonies of southern Africa. The study focuses on Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa because of their similar colonial background and also being the last countries to gain independence in the region.  **Goal and Objectives:**  The objective of the study is to analyse the role of land policies in enabling increased agricultural production, productivity and value addition for export. It examines the land policy challenges which are being experienced in the sub-region.  **Methodology:**  The paper used desktop research. A systematic review of literature guided by detailed and comprehensive search of relevant and related studies was done. Online publications including books, peer reviewed journal articles, book chapters and policy briefs were reviewed to understand issues concerning agricultural productivity and national land policies.  **Results:**  The results show that despite the implementation of land reform programmes; poverty, inequality and unemployment persist in the countries. On agricultural land incentives are not aligned to ensure both economic efficiency and productivity. There has been emerging land policy coherence in South Africa and Namibia, but much less in Zimbabwe; giving the countries enough scope to learn from each other’s experiences. Improved agricultural productivity will require land policies to address the key objective of land use efficiency through the instrument of land tenure security and investment in land.  ***Keywords***  *Land Policy, Agricultural Productivity, Land Use Efficiency, Exports, Free Trade Area, Africa* |

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Poverty, inequality and unemployment have endured in Southern Africa even after the attainment of independence and implementation of land reform programmes. Land is the main resource providing for economic development and poverty reduction (Deininger, 2003). However, land policies have not been responsive enough to demands and dynamic environment to offer productive land use. Agriculture has, Free been the backbone of economic development in Namibia and South, but much less in Zimbabwe. After realising these challenges, it has become the goal of governments in Southern Africa to eradicate poverty and ensure economic growth. This has resulted in a number of policies implemented to deal with economic growth and boost the agricultural sector both nationally and across the continent. Agricultural productivity is key and is determined by land policies implemented in the respective countries. Agricultural productivity is the measurement of the quantity of output produced with a given quantity of inputs. Productivity growth is a result of improvements in farmers’ production efficiency and technological progress. African countries introduced the African continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA) to promote agricultural trade in Africa as growth in member economies increases the demand for processed agricultural products offering expanding opportunities for agriculture and agribusiness growth on the continent. The products include sugar, dairy and poultry, beverages, miscellaneous prepared foods, animal and vegetable oil, and prepared cereals. To achieve this, AfCFTA places its focus on key areas that are facilitation of trade, trade policy, productive capacities, trade related infrastructure, trade finance, and factor market integration (Johnson, et al., 2022).

The goal of the AfCFTA is to boost trade within Africa in the next decade by 25 to 30 percent. It also eventually intends to establish a continent-wide African Economic Community. The basis of the AfCFTA agreement is provision of greater opportunities to earn economies of scale, greater competition and specialisation hence efficiency, a more attractive internal market for foreign and domestic investment, and an acceleration of intra-regional trade and eventually ensure economic growth and poverty eradication (Echandi et al., 2022). All African countries except Eritrea joined the AFCFTA. AfCFTA aims at eliminating trade barriers and investment and create Africa's largest free trade area, with a combined gross domestic product of about US$ 2.5 trillion and a market size of 1.2 billion people (African Union, 2018). African nations trade more with countries outside the continent than within Africa. Approximately 85 percent of all African countries’ exports are destined to outside Africa and these are largely raw or semi-finished primary commodities (Signé, 2023).

Globally, SDG 8 promotes sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. Targets 8.1 to 8.3 seek to sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances, achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technology upgrading and innovation, including a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors; and promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation. Governments can enable the achievement of the targets through structuring land policies for effective participation in the implementation of the AfCFTA. Africa would likely benefit from the Free Trade Area in realising its agricultural and economic potential, promotion of inclusive growth and attain sustainable development through improving spaces for trade in agricultural produce. The paper argues that the countries have the opportunity to use land policy to boost competitiveness, diversify product supply, and export products with higher value addition. Given that Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe embarked on land redistribution as a way of addressing colonial legacies of inequality, the state can therefore intervene in the land market and help determine productivity. Land redistribution is expected to bring efficiency gains to the local economy as smallholder farmers’ labour-intensive production is less costly than large scale production. Smallholder farmers realise much higher return to capital than large farmers. Land redistribution that creates small farms would not only boost aggregate production but bring about more equitable distribution of income; and a more equitable land distribution is expected to bring about higher economic growth. So, land policy is important for economic growth, equity, employment and poverty reduction (Deininger, 2003).

The AfCFTA will progressively remove tariffs on intra-African trade, making it easier for African exporters to access the expanding continental market (Acharya and Buzan, 2019; Aniche, 2020). For example, African exporters face an average tariff of 6.1% when they export within Africa. This is significantly higher than the average tariffs they face when they export to other destinations outside Africa. Projections further point out that, by eliminating tariffs, the AfCFTA has the potential to boost intra-African trade by 52.3%, and this will double if non-tariff barriers are also diminished. Thus, AfCFTA agreement creates the largest free-trade area globally. The agreement includes the creation of a single market aimed at improving intra-African trade, enable investment, improve continental economic integration, and enhance the competitiveness of its Member States both within the continent and in the global market (World Bank, 2020). Africa’s trade is expected to change in practices as a result of the agreement with the goal of accelerating economic growth particularly in the agricultural sector where smallholder farmers, processors, and informal cross border traders stand to highly benefit from market access expansion. To this end economies are to be structurally transformed to create shared growth, employment and economic opportunities for all. Improved agricultural production, productivity and value addition are a development priority for food security and the generation of surplus for trade. This is achieved through the use of land as a factor of production, improved farmer and national competitiveness.

In light of this background the paper seeks to examine the role of national land policies in the promotion of agricultural productivity and exports – export competitiveness. Export competitiveness is the ability of a nation to produce and sell goods and services in foreign markets at a price and quality that ensure long-term viability and sustainability (Olyanga et al., 2022). It is regarded an important indicator of the success of organisations through increased export of value-added goods and services. Export competitiveness is vital for effective participation in international trade and ultimate management of balance of trade distress. The paper analyses how a country’s land policy can improve land use efficiency. Land policy has the ability to make products produced in a country more competitive, bringing down costs thereby taking advantage of opportunities offered by the free trade area. African countries are living in poverty and experiencing economic deterioration. A boost in agricultural exports will foster economic development.

Following this introduction are theoretical frameworks where theories relevant to the study are outlined. This is followed by methodology used in the paper. Methodology is followed by a review of relevant literature on land policies and agricultural productivity. The next section presents the results and discussion. The concluding section provides a summary and recommendations in relation to the stated objectives of the study.

**2**. **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

**2.1 Institutionalism Theory**

In Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa, land policy has a component on the redistribution of large-scale commercial farms to landless blacks. According to institutionalism theory, the state can intervene in the land market based on the “inverse farm size-productivity relationship” (van den Brink 2006, p. 19). It is now an established fact that land redistribution brings efficiency gains to the local economy as smallholder farmers’ labour-intensive production is less costly than large-scale production (Dorner, 1971; van den Brink, 2006). Smallholder farmers realise much higher return to capital than large farmers. Large farms are less efficient because of higher transaction costs arising from the supervision of hired labour.

If the higher efficiency of smallholder farms argument holds, land redistribution that creates small farms would not only boost aggregate production but bring about more equitable distribution of income. A more equitable land distribution is expected to bring about higher economic growth. In the case of China, initial high and sustained economic growth and poverty reduction was associated with the transition from collective large-scale farms to smallholder farms in the late 1970s. The dismantling of collectivisation and adoption of market liberalisation buoyed economic growth which drastically reduced poverty (van den Brink at al., 2006). A more equitable distribution of income stimulates demand for domestic goods and services in support of a growing industrial sector. It enables small farmers to venture into non-farm businesses as they seek to diversify investment risk.

Large-scale farms are often subsidised by government through such mechanisms as special tax breaks and cheap credit; and invest in machines that displace labour at a faster rate than manufacturing industry can absorb it. Even as production on large-scale farms increases, technology adoption may bring down contribution to employment. On the contrary, the creation of smallholder farms would generate employment for excess labour and relieve rural-urban migration (Dorner, 1971, 1992; Rukuni et al., 2006).

The preceding exposition of institutionalism theory has shown that land policy is important for economic growth, equity, employment creation and poverty reduction. Besides the efficiency argument, land policy secures tenure enabling landholders to invest on the land thereby increasing productivity. Realised higher incomes stimulate demand for industrial products with consequent poverty reduction and empowerment of individuals and communities (Deininger, 2003; Bromley, 2008).

**2.2 Ricardo’s Theory on Comparative Advantage**

David Ricardo traced the benefits of international trade on economic growth who believe that free trade leads to economic prosperity (Maneschi, 1992; Murdock, 2020). According to the Neo-classical theory the level of exports and imports plays an important role in determining a nation’s economic and social development (Tivatyi, et al., 2022). Exports can create and boost investment opportunities through inflows of foreign exchange that are also necessary to import goods and services. International trade increases production output and consumption efficiency, resulting in welfare gains to trading regions or countries. International trade allows and supports countries to specialise which brings production costs and consumer prices downwards. Hence, specialisation and international trade combine leading to increase consumption possibilities. Consumption efficiency is the **total usage of the product** that is the period of usage and/or the number of usages the customer gets out of the product before discard. It assesses the relationship between input and useful output, with the aim of achieving the greatest possible output from a given input.

Portugal and England were used by Ricardo as examples. Portugal specialising in wine and England specialising in cloth to show the necessity for countries to focus on those goods in which they have comparative advantage over other countries (Ukwandu, 2015). On the other hand, a country’s imports will be scarce goods. It is vital to understand that Ricardo’s theory of comparative advantage was introduced on the following assumptions: There are two countries and two commodities with perfect competition that is both in commodities and factor markets (Ukwandu, 2015). The cost of production is measured in terms of labour, and the value of a commodity is measured in terms of labour hours/days required to produce it. Labour is the only factor of production, and other factors, such as natural resources, are ignored. The cost of labour is similar in all countries. International trade between countries is not encumbered by any kind of barrier or tariffs.

According to Ricardo, for Portugal to produce the wine might require only the labour of 80 men for one year, and to produce the cloth in the same might require the labour of 90 men for the same time. It would thus be advantageous for Portugal to export wine in exchange for cloth (Landsburg, 2007). This exchange might even take place nonetheless that the commodity imported by Portugal could be produced there with less labour than in England. Though she could make cloth with the labour of 90 men, she would import it from a country where it needed the labour of 100men to produce it, since it would be beneficial to her rather to employ her capital in the production of wine, for which she would acquire more cloth from England, than she could produce by diverting a portion of her capital from the cultivation of vines to the manufacture of cloth (Medema and Samuels, 2013).

The notion of comparative advantage as a basis of international trade was popularised by Ricardo. Ricardo invoked factor endowments to explain why Portugal exported wine and Britain cloth. Subsequently, the principle of comparative advantage has come to be accepted as an almost universal law of economics. Ricardo placed emphasis on physical and natural influences over competitiveness, technological and human factors (Tivatyi, et al., 2022). Indeed, as time went on, England stopped producing wine, and Portugal stopped manufacturing cloth. Both nations realised that it was to their advantage to stop their efforts at producing these items and, instead, to trade in order to obtain them.

Production costs are major aspects to deal with in agricultural value chain. They are the main decision factors for sourcing and investing in value chains, as they represent a comparative advantage. Figures vary, but in general there is agreement around the fact that agricultural productivity in Africa is inferior to the world average (Jayne and Sanchez, 2021). A national implementation strategy is a tool that each can utilise in the identification of its comparative advantage and formulate measures to influence that advantage with a view to obtaining the highest probable benefit from the creation of the AFCFTA. Countries can therefore align policies so that they produce products that they have comparative advantage on.

**2.3 Heckscher-Ohlin Model**

The Heckscher-Ohlin model explains the international division of labour in terms of different endowments of different countries with two factors of production - labour and capital (Goldin, 1990). The two fundamental hypotheses of the standard Heckscher-Ohlin model are that factors of production are immobile between nations and that these factors are used in different combinations to produce different goods. A country will then have a comparative advantage in good X if the nation is relatively well endowed with factors that are used intensively in the production of X.

The Heckscher– Ohlin theorem suggests that, with free trade, a country will export the good that uses its relatively abundant factor intensively and import the good that uses its relatively scare factor intensively (Zhang and Sun, 2022). The theory is based on the assumption that nations have access to the same technology and share the same tastes, but differ in endowments of productive factors. The Heckscher–Ohlin theorem predicts that countries produce relatively more of the goods that use their relatively abundant factors intensively, and states that variations in comparative advantage come from differences in factor abundance and factor intensity of goods (Leamer, 1995). The theory is commonly acceptable for its explanatory role of national factor endowment differences in determining the pattern of trade according to comparative advantage.

The model emphasises international trade benefits and the worldwide benefits to everyone when each country puts the most effort into exporting resources that are domestically naturally abundant. All countries benefit when they import the resources they naturally lack. Because a country does not have to rely solely on internal markets, it can take advantage of [elastic](about:blank) demand. The [cost of labour](about:blank) increases and marginal productivity declines as more countries and emerging markets develop. Trading internationally allows countries to adjust to capital-intensive goods production, which would not be possible if each country only sold goods internally.

The three theories have been used in the study because the goal is to increase agricultural productivity. Institutionalism avers that land redistribution brings efficiency gains to the local economy as smallholder farmers’ labour-intensive production is less costly than large-scale production. Ricardo’s theory shows how countries can get the best when trading. They provide crucial insights into patterns and determinants of trade. The Heckscher–Ohlin theory states that countries exporting products utilise their cheap and abundant factors of production and import products that consume scarce factors of production. According to Ricardo, labour does not give a comparative advantage without differences in the degree of technological advancement among nations. Land policies in countries should be formulated in a manner that will allow production of goods that have comparative advantage. Land policy to be implemented to make products more competitive. Thus, governments have the opportunity to use land policy to boost competitiveness, diversify product supply, and export products with higher value addition.

**3. METHODOLOGY**

The paper used desktop research. A systematic review of literature guided by detailed and comprehensive search of relevant and related studies was done. Online publications including books, peer reviewed journal articles, book chapters and policy briefs were reviewed to understand issues concerning agricultural productivity and national land policies. The search involved capturing as much literature as possible. Key words from research objective were used to search relevant material on academic journals and google scholar.

**4. LITERATURE REVIEW**

**4.1 Land Tenure Security**

Land policies play a crucial role in creating an enabling environment for agricultural productivity and ensuring effective participation in trade. Land policies involve equitable distribution of land, land use efficiency and environment sustainability. A nation’s land policy can be used to improve land use efficiency through making sure that land tenure is secure. Secure tenure encourages landholders to invest in land improvement such as dams, boreholes, irrigation and communication which is crucial in enhancing agricultural productivity (Matondi and Dekker, 2011). Land policies can also be used to make products more competitive and ability to take advantage of opportunities offered by the Free Trade Area.

Agricultural transformation in Asian countries is characterised by secure tenure through large-scale land rights formalisation interventions that encourage farmers to invest in the land. Secure tenure enables farmers to access funding from financial institutions which they can invest in land. Increased farmer investment in the land results in higher agricultural productivity and better rural livelihoods (Jayne et al.; 2015). Asia’s success shows that secure land tenure can contribute to economic growth through incentivising landholders to invest and improve agricultural productivity, as there is assurance that returns from their investments will not be appropriated (Zhang, 2006). Secure tenure allows factor mobility and efficiency gains, as land can be transferred to the most productive, and efficient farmers via land markets. By easing access to formal credit, secure tenure allows landholders to invest in their land.

After attaining independence African countries used land reform to deal with inequalities caused by the colonialists. However, despite introducing land reforms, communal land continued to belong to the state. The form of tenure on land can affect land management and productivity for numerous reasons. If there is insecurity of tenure, the landholder operating the plot may have less incentive to invest in land improvement (Feder, et al. 1988). The form of tenure may also affect households’ access to credit, the transferability of land, which can affect the ability to use the land efficiently or owners’ incentives to invest in land improvement (Pender and Kerr 1999). All of these factors affect agricultural productivity.

In Africa, land policy formulation has intensified in response to the persistence of complex land problems, struggles over access to land for agriculture and livelihoods, and to meet varied political, economic, social and environmental objectives. The approaches and strategies pursued vary by country, region and historical experience, but neoliberal policy frameworks, which tend to treat land as a market commodity rather than a public good, have dominated the design of national land policies (United Nations. Economic Commission for Africa and Moyo, 2004). Imperfections in land ownership and distribution are said to impede the incentives needed for accelerating agricultural growth. Hence, in the traditional sense, land reform can be defined as the demand for greater stress on development and improved agricultural productivity (Dawson et al., 2016). In neoclassical theory, land is treated as a marketable commodity which should be priced and allocated according to its marginal productivity. This theory is appropriate in dealing with complex practical questions of land reform and agricultural productivity. Improving security of tenure agricultural productivity is essential for economic growth.

Increased agricultural productivity and exports require more profitable and inclusive public actions to reduce costs in farm production and agri-food systems, and address soil degradation, climate change, land scarcity and concentrated land ownership (Giller et al., 2021; Calicioglu et al., 2019). This is determined by how conducive land policies are towards promoting agricultural productivity. The future of work in Africa will, hence, depend on how well the enabling environment created through policies and programmes can enhance agricultural productivity growth and enable agriculture to contribute to more broad-based employment generation and the overall agenda for economic transformation.

Land policy across Africa has adapted over the years to prevailing policy trends. Historically, decentralized land management via tribes or other groups predominated, both in the pre-colonial period and afterward (Jayne et al., 2009). Despite their prevalence (and relative ease of implementation, given that many rural areas are far from urban centres and lack infrastructure), these customary land tenure systems were initially seen as inefficient by newly independent African states and international actors. They were regarded as particularly inefficient compared to freehold tenure systems that would purportedly increase investment, agricultural productivity, and overall economic development, while decreasing poverty (Higgins et al., 2018). Underpinning this view was an assumption that with rising land scarcity and land value, land rights would evolve to be increasingly linked to individuals as an economic asset rather than as a social asset of collective communities. Land policy was designed to induce this ‘evolutionary’ process through individual titling. One of the most serious obstacles to increasing the agricultural productivity and income is insecurity of land tenure. Security of tenure is the key to having control over major decisions, such as what crop to grow, what techniques to use, what to consume and what to sell. Without this, women cannot access credit and membership of agricultural associations, particularly those responsible for processing and marketing (Holden and Ghebru, 2016). Their access to technological inputs is limited. They are frequently not reached by extension services and are rarely members of cooperatives, which often distribute government-subsidized inputs and vital market information to small farmers. In addition, they lack the cash income needed to purchase inputs even when these are subsidized.

Land policy has a huge impact on land utilisation; thus, it impacts the efficiency and equity of land use. Agricultural productivity is a reflection of improvements in farmers’ production efficiency and technological progress. Secure tenure together with financial support increases farmer’s interest in investing in the land. A conducive environment where there is secure tenure ensures farmers that they own the land leading to full utilisation of agricultural land and encouraged investment. Tenure insecurity and the lack of a collateral base for credit affect production of most commodities thereby contributing to the underutilization of land (Alban Singirankabo and Willem Ertsen, 2020; Zikhali, 2008). Insecurity of tenure hinders capital development and investment on allocated land and hence productivity.

**4.2 Land Policy**

European settlers gained control over land through “agreements”, conquests and appropriation. Direct control of land and engagement in agriculture was prominent in Southern Africa particularly in the settler states of South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia. Independence from colonial rule was staggered over time from the late 1950’s through to the 1990’s, with Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa coming last. Thus, the processes of nation building, such as, the establishment of independent political systems and the design of policies and development strategies including land policy making and land reforms, were staggered as well (Hull et al., 2019). Land reforms, especially to redress colonially based unequal ownership and to rationalize discriminatory land use policies and insecure land tenure systems begun in the 1950s and continued more vigorously from the 1960s onwards.

Land policy seeks to address equity and social justice issues by addressing historical inequities and injustices-based differences such as race, social status, gender and political affiliation. It also ensures efficient use of land that is safeguarding that land transferred would be used productively for food production for domestic consumption and export, and raw materials for manufacturing industry. Land policy also addresses environmental management for sustainable production and productivity (Chavunduka et al., 2021). Land policies have been driven mainly towards equitable distribution through land redistribution and resettlement programmes, but much less on land use efficiency and environmental management objectives.

Land policy involves the set of agreed principles to govern ownership (or access to), use and management of land resources to enhance their productivity and contribution to social, economic, political and environmental development and poverty alleviation (African Union, 2009). Evidence points to four strategic priority areas. Governments implement inclusive smallholder development policies that increase the incomes of millions of rural people engaged in agriculture and thereby generate the multiplier effects that expand employment opportunities in the rest of the economy. Government actions that have the most significant impacts on agricultural productivity growth and poverty reduction are: agricultural research and development; physical infrastructure (rural electrification, road, rail and port infrastructure); policies that reduce the costs of private sector investment and promote competition, and agricultural service delivery and extension systems that facilitate farmers’ access to productivity-enhancing technologies (Jayne et al, 2017). Significantly, land policy aims to promote good management of land in response to the identified social, economic and environmental constraints.

Despite its comparative advantage in several agricultural products, Africa’s share in total exports at the world level is relatively low when compared to other regions with a similar level of development. This can be explained by several factors, including large domestic demand, lack of competitiveness, high tariffs and numerous non-tariff measures (NTMs) in different destinations. In other research, the blocking factors identified relate to structural and political barriers (Fusacchia et al., 2022). Overall, tariff barriers to trade and overlapping memberships tend to confuse regional integration goals and lead to counterproductive competition between countries and regional economic groupings. Africa’s proliferation of trade agreements makes it a ‘spaghetti bowl’ of both reciprocal and non-reciprocal trade agreements. Various nations belong concurrently to various regional groupings, which correspond to diverse realities and sometimes have diverse or even opposing objectives.

The adoption of technology by land reform beneficiaries is essential for increased agricultural productivity. A significant thing to consider is the role that land policies have been playing to enable investment in farm technology. Technology adoption is examined with respect to farm equipment and machinery, irrigation, inputs such as fertilizer, hybrid seed, pesticides and insecticides (Chavunduka, 2020).

**4.3 The African Continental Free Trade Area**

In 2018 the creation of the AfCFTA established the world’s largest free trade area by population (1.3 billion) and with a combined GDP of $3 trillion as of 2022. The AfCFTA presents African countries with an opportunity to take advantage of expanding trade to result in economic growth and improved standard of living across African nations. The AfCFTA has seven protocols that are on: trade in goods; trade in services; (investment, intellectual property rights; competition policy; rules and procedures on dispute settlement; investment; and free movement of people (Kassa et al., 2022). The predominant objectives of the trade in goods protocol are: progressive elimination of tariffs and non-tariff barriers, enhancing the efficiency of customs, trade facilitation and transit, cooperation on technical barriers to trade and sanitary and phytosanitary, development and promotion of regional and continental value chains, socio-economic development, diversification and industrialization across Africa (Aniche, 2020).

According to United Nations (2016) African exporters to Africa; South Africa (rice, legumes, maize, cotton, oil, beef/livestock, dairy, poultry and fisheries). Zimbabwe (tobacco, cotton and fisheries); Namibia (beef/livestock, poultry, fisheries). African exporters to world; South Africa (rice, legumes, maize, oil, beef/livestock, dairy, poultry and fisheries), Zimbabwe (cotton, tobacco); Namibia (beef/livestock, poultry, fisheries).

The AfCFTA will serve as a strong enabler of economic transformation and development across Africa. By all indicators, the continent’s industrial and agricultural exports are forecast to benefit most from the AfCFTA. This has the added benefit of weaning many African economies away from overdependence on export earnings from volatile commodities, particularly from the extractive industries, towards more secure and sustainable foreign exchange revenue streams (UNDP, 2020; Fusacchia et al., 2022). Furthermore, businesses across Africa will be better placed to integrate into global value chains as a result of better coordination in international trade negotiations with the rest of the world. The impact of the AfCFTA would largely depend on existing national and local policies and practices. Specifically, a good understanding of the causes of national food insecurity and already established operational strategies for food security and agricultural development would help governments to adequately position themselves in policymaking processes in the context of the AfCFTA. This would, in turn, improve the chance that such countries indeed benefit from the Trade Area (FAO, 2020). In quarter one of 2023, South Africa’s total agricultural products exports amounted to US$2.8 billion, up by 4.0% from US$2.7 billion in quarter four of 2022. The main drivers of this increase in export earnings were sizeable agricultural output in recent seasons due to favourable weather conditions and higher commodity prices.

**4.4 Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa**

In Zimbabwe, the major challenge confronting the nation is to make the resettled land productive. With expropriation, land became the property of the government. As such, it ceased to be a transferrable asset. The subsequent collapse of the agricultural sector is rooted in the enduring failure of the Zimbabwe government to develop an effective land policy (Chavunduka, 2020). Rather, land policy has long been characterised by incoherence, irregularities, and inconsistencies. Part of the incoherence arose from a desire to address inequality in land ownership, but at the same time acting to undermine new farmers’ property rights. This insecurity arose because the land on which new farmers were settled was now owned by the government and was, therefore, worthless as collateral. Clear property rights in agriculture also have the potential of increasing revenues through taxation and enhancement of agricultural exports. There is limited investment in agriculture because of insecure tenure. Insecure tenure is coupled with a series of flawed macro-economic policies which undermine farmers as they struggle to become productive.

Land reform is important in South Africa for two main reasons. Firstly, land has productive value and those from whom access has been unfairly removed are unable to enjoy the economic and income generation potential that such land can offer (Cousins, 2016). Land reform has been a tool both to rectify the imbalance of economic opportunities and to restore ownership. It has been shown to reduce poverty, support sustained growth, and increase efficiency. Secondly, land and access to land has political resonance, representing dignity, heritage, belonging, and restorative justice. To date government initiatives on agriculture and land reform have been slow in achieving the required success. However, there is now additional evidence that the commercial agricultural industry and private individuals have made substantive progress.

The AfCFTA presents perhaps the greatest opportunity for South Africa, in terms of diversifying its export basket, enhancing food security and agricultural development. Despite the positive intent of the AfCFTA (Seti and Daw, 2022), which stems from liberalising trade by reducing and ultimately eliminating tariff barriers between AU member states, its socio-economic consequences at the national and local level should not be overlooked. South Africa has embraced the notion of internationalism since the end of apartheid rule in 1994. The country has witnessed major modifications in trade policies, which have enabled it to engage in extensive trade liberalisation, resulting in a decline of its average most favoured nation (MFN) applied tariffs from 23% in the 1990s to 6.65% in 2017 (Mhonyera, 2023). Individually and as part of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), South Africa maintains various bilateral trade relations with many countries and trading blocs around the globe. The country is Africa’s largest exporter and importer. Africa has always been a priority in South Africa’s trade policy accomplishments.

Land reform in Namibia was a response to the historically unequal distribution of productive agricultural land. The objective of resettlement is for beneficiaries are to become self-reliant, to contribute to the national economy and to create jobs (Wener and Kruger, 2007). However, the current performance results of the resettlement programme suggest a loss for the economy if taken from the point of view that resettlement farms were used for commercial purposes before. Some of the major problems that result in the low productivity of the resettlement programme as a whole are the fact that beneficiaries have very little access or no access to credit markets. This situation is contributed to the fact that resettlement beneficiaries do not hold any form of title deeds which could be used for collateral.

In Namibia assistance, particularly from donors, does requires that the aims and objectives of redistributive land reform in particular be spelled out more clearly by government. At present it would appear as if land redistribution is expected to address a range of different issues such as redressing past injustices, poverty alleviation, environmental protection (by relieving pressures on communal land) and increased agricultural productivity and output (Kuhlmann and Agutu, 2019). However, no prioritisation of these objectives exists. This may in turn be related to the absence of comprehensive cost-benefit analyses, which would enable government to weigh different options for land redistribution and make more informed decisions. The AfCFTA provides an opportunity to increase Namibia’s trade opportunities or market share in Africa, provided the right support is given to local crop farmers to competitively take advantage of the agreement. Namibian crop farmers seek to invest in increased production of high-value crops that the country has a competitive advantage on such as grapes, dates, blueberries, citrus, sweet pepper, tomatoes, and onions to explore and take advantage of the opportunities brought about by the AfCFTA.

**5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

After the attainment of independence in Namibia and Zimbabwe and the end of the apartheid era in South Africa, land policy implemented by the governments show absence of holistic policy to address good land governance, equity and social justice, land use efficiency, land tenure security, poverty reduction, land and environmental management, national healing and stability (Mangwanya, 2020). Results show emerging land policy coherence in South Africa and Namibia, but much less in Zimbabwe. South Africa and Namibia have somewhat managed to use land policy to boost competitiveness, diversify product supply, and export products with higher value addition. However, in Zimbabwe this is not the case as the environment is not conducive for agricultural productivity. Results show that land policy affects systems of land ownership. Without secure land tenure, farmers become hesitant to invest in land and develop needed technology. Also, without secure tenure, there is limited or no access to finance. Tenure security has benefits when landholders want to borrow money from financial institutions as it is characterised by less risks and brings down interest rates. In the three countries, land tenure security is still debatable. Land tenure impacts investment, credit availability, value of land and agricultural productivity. Landholders lack incentives to invest in or profit from land. In South Africa, although there has been comparatively higher agricultural productivity, there is persistence of inequality.

**5.1 Zimbabwe**

Zimbabwe’s land policy has the objectives of attaining a correct balance between equity, productivity and sustainability. It also has objectives on increasing agricultural exports and foreign exchange earnings while maintaining a correct balance between the environment and development. In practice land policy focus has been on land redistribution at the expense of productivity measures.

On resettlement land, the government grants permits and 99-year leases as forms of tenure, but the conditions of such forms of ownership are too weak to serve as security for financing, deterring agricultural investment. Insecure tenure compromises development in that there is the inability to subdivide parcels below the economically viable farm sizes, limitations on the number of farms that can be owned by an entity, and government determination of land value. In practice, agricultural performance has not been a policy priority as the social costs of risk of land concentration and inequality sometimes outweigh the importance of productivity concerns. On some of the acquired former commercial farms, exports have resumed in cases where land reform beneficiaries have gone into joint venture businesses with commercial farmers. Tobacco is the most important cash crop in terms of generating foreign exchange. In 2021 the country exported just over 210,000 tons of tobacco at an average price of US$2.80, earning the nation US$588.7 million.  The country exports its tobacco to Asian countries, with China accounting for the bulk of the exports (Zimbabwe Country Commercial Guide, 2022).

A significant proportion (42%) of Zimbabwe’s land is under communal ownership. Legally, communal land is held on a usufruct basis and cannot be bought or sold, or even rented out; but informally, this happens all the time. There is a complex traditional system of customary land ownership that has always been characterised by very low levels of productivity because in most cases it is impossible to increase land holding to a size that is commercially viable. Communal land policy limits agricultural productivity which negatively affects exports.

It is when smallholder farmers sufficiently increase their farm size and produce surpluses, that they can begin to grow higher value horticultural crops for export. In order to be able to export, they have to be competitive in international markets, which means increasing productivity by becoming more efficient to lower costs. Once this stage is reached, then there is a tendency for like-minded farmers to form associations for purposes of sharing ideas, exploring markets and trade. Only then will the AfCFTA become relevant. Even then, most agricultural export markets lie in Europe and Asia where demand for such products is highest.

**5.2 Namibia**

In Namibia, a necessary starting point in the reconstruction of the economy is to create a system related to land allocation and land use support systems that alleviates the land hunger predominant in disadvantaged societies. This is crucial in ensuring the long-term productive use of land, which is aimed at reaching the objectives of the land reform process such as self -reliance, creating employment as well as contributing towards the national economy. The majority of land reform beneficiaries engage in agricultural activities and their produce is small and is primarily for personal consumption (Harring and Odendaal 2002). These beneficiaries have received farms without the required infrastructure necessary to develop the land effectively.

Namibia’s land reform policy is shaped by two key pieces of legislation: the 1995 Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act 6 and the 2002 Communal Land Reform Act 5. Namibia’s land reform approach has been the “willing seller, willing buyer” and the provision of fair compensation as directed by the Namibian constitution. The implementation of redistributive land reforms to solve colonial inequalities and provide land access and secure tenure for people living in communal areas resulted in somewhat mixed outcomes. Agricultural production goals and modernisation have not been attained and living communal lands in the process.

Livestock farming continues to dominate the sector by contributing approximately two-thirds of agricultural production. The commercial livestock farming sector in Namibia is well developed, capital-intensive and export oriented. Namibia’s export earnings from commodities of ‘Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing’ sector for the fourth quarter of 2021 amounted to N$3.7 billion whereas the import bill stood at N$1.2 billion. The Fisheries products accounted for the highest foreign earnings at N$2.1 billion followed by the, agricultural commodities that brought income of N$1.3 billion (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2022)

**5.3 South Africa**

The country is a major exporter of agricultural products to many African countries. South Africa’s manufacturers are among the most efficient in Africa and stand to benefit from the AfCFTA through increasing their exports to the African region. Horticulture was the leading agricultural product that South Africa exported in 2020, valued at 5.4 billion U.S. dollars. Horticulture was followed by cereal exports at 1.1 billion U.S. dollars ([Natalie Cowling](about:blank), 2023). In 2022 top export products included maize, wine, grapes, citrus, berries, nuts, apples and pears, sugar, avocados, and wool. A total of 37% of South Africa's agricultural exports in 2022 were to African nations. Asia accounts for 27% thus becoming the second largest agricultural market. Asia is followed by the E.U., accounting for 19%., Americas region accounting for 7%, and the remaining 10% is exported to the rest of the world (Sihlobo, 2023).

At the global level, South Africa is the 38th largest exporting economy and the 39th largest importing economy. The country is Africa’s largest exporter and importer. Africa has always been a priority in South Africa’s trade policy accomplishments (Mhonyera and Meyer, 2023). Hence, South Africa has strived to accelerate the regional integration agenda in the African continent. The participation of the country in regional trade integration and liberalisation initiatives such as the tripartite FTA and the AfCFTA attest to this.

The implementation of the AfCFTA involves large reductions in tariff and non-tariff trade barriers. These reductions could increase the median merchandise trade flow between African countries by 15 percent and median real per capita GDP by 1.25 percent. If the reductions in tariff and non-tariff barriers are combined with substantial improvements in the trade environment, the payoff to countries would be significantly higher. Comprehensive reforms combined with implementation of the AfCFTA could increase the median produce trade flow between African countries by 53 percent and with the rest of the world by 15 percent, and as a result raise the real per capita GDP of the median African country by more than 10 percent (ElGanainy et al., 2023). This result resonates with findings in the literature that trade reforms could help reduce extreme poverty by an additional 30–50 million people across the continent.

**5.4 Discussion**

Zimbabwe differs from Namibia and South Africa because the later have a vibrant commercial agriculture sector, while the one in Zimbabwe is undergoing recovery. What the countries have in common is extensive communal areas that are much less productive.

The argument that as farm sizes decrease, they become more productive has been noted. Paradoxically, the problem is that family incomes also decline significantly as farms get smaller and smaller. This partly explains the widespread poverty in communal and villagized resettlement areas. If one compares productivity to ‘cultivated area’ (rather than total farm size) one gets a completely different picture: very low output per hectare on small farms. The important point is that there is a very clear correlation between farm size and income. The bigger the farm the higher the household income. Once the farm size reaches a certain point – around 10 hectares – commercial smallholder production kicks in, where the farmer starts entering the market. At this stage, the potential to export crops opens up.

Once the smallholder becomes a commercial producer, the household generates surpluses that can be invested in productivity enhancing agricultural investments. Households can also spend more on health and education as well as consumer goods, thus setting up virtuous cycles of demand linkages with the wider economy, and stimulating economic growth. In a nutshell, increased agricultural productivity and higher incomes are directly tied to farm size.

The question becomes about how to increase the size of farms in communal areas? The key to a land policy that promotes agricultural productivity is to create a framework that allows a land market to develop where farmers can rent, buy and sell farmland. Gradually, the productive farmers will rent and buy more land to increase their farm size, realise economies of scale, and become more efficient and productive. All this can be enabled through the registration of communal households’ land.

The Ricardian theory underscores the merits and benefits of free trade, and stimulates about the idea of complete specialisation. The idea of complete specialisation in international trade is impractical, and the narrative is hence based on economic myth and imagination. When the theory is applied to sub-Saharan African countries, its weaknesses become glaring. The effect of unfettered free trade, globalisation and specialisation on less economically developed countries that do not yet have the technical and manufacturing resources to compete with developed countries should be considered. For African countries, it would be a huge task to jumpstart economic growth, job creation, poverty eradication and meaningful development and transformation by fully adhering to the tenets of Ricardo’s theory. Under the prevailing conditions of the world, the result of general free trade would not be a universal republic, but, on the contrary a universal subjection of the less advanced nations to the supremacy of the predominant manufacturing, commercial and naval power (developed countries).

To the extent that comparative advantage is a determinant of economic performance, it may be expected that it is revealed in economic growth and the share of agriculture in this growth. The theory of comparative advantage failed to demonstrate that countries export commodities which require relatively intensive use of their relatively abundant factors of production. Modifications to the standard Heckshcher-Ohlin-Samuelson model by Johnson and others to widen the definition of capital to include not only physical capital but also human capital and technological know-how, allows measurement of relative capital intensity in terms of relative value added per unit of labour time input.

The AfCFTA has created opportunities for trade among African countries. It has harmonised with overlapping regional bodies such as COMESA, ECOWAS, SADC and the EAC, for example, concerning rules of origin. But production structures in African countries are such that they compete in the production of similar goods and services thereby making it difficult to buy from each other. Complementarities would arise through the promotion of value addition that fosters differentiation of products, but there has not been much value addition, for example, Zimbabwe exports tobacco leaf instead of cigarettes and cotton lint instead of textile products. Value addition is important because it creates employment and results in products fetching a higher price.

The major importers of southern African agricultural products are in Europe and Asia because that is where demand exists. The formation of the AfCFTA may have garnered a huge regional population, but that does not translate to effective demand. African countries are at a low level of development, with the majority population occupied in agricultural activities where household incomes tend to be low. As well, many African countries experience foreign exchange problems and may not be able to pay for importation of technology and raw materials which are needed for industrialisation. An assumption held by the AfCFTA is that prices of goods produced by member states will be lower than that of products imported from abroad, but that ignores realities on the ground.

Unless African countries invest in infrastructure, the eradication of corruption and removal of bureaucratic delays at border posts, their products are unlikely to be lower than those from abroad. Moving a container from abroad is likely to be cheaper than transportation within the African region. Thus, African countries have not been able to compete with agricultural products from Europe and Asia because of economies of scale in production, technological knowhow. Production costs are higher on the African continent than abroad resulting in products that are not competitive. Moreso, African countries do not produce high value products like agricultural machinery and it is when they industrialise that the AfCFTA will have relevance. Technical efficiency has been low for African countries because of lower levels of technology, skills and knowhow.

The results show contrasting trajectories in the way in which the three countries have implemented land policy. Despite the implementation of land reform programmes; poverty, inequality and unemployment persist in the countries. On agricultural land, incentives are not aligned to ensure both economic efficiency and productivity. There has been emerging land policy coherence in South Africa and Namibia, but much less in Zimbabwe; giving the countries enough scope to learn from each other’s experiences. Improved agricultural productivity will require land policies to address the key objective of land use efficiency through the instrument of land tenure security and investment in land. For all the three countries, it emerged that land policy should be consistent and integrated into a long-term economic strategy (Deininger, 2003). Moreso, it should provide incentives for productive work and investment and address production factors consistent with the cost and availability of these factors at a given time. When these conditions are satisfied the economic development fostered will stimulate trade thereby actualizing the Africa Continental Free Trade Area. Hence, the operationalization of the Free Trade Area will require careful attention to national land policies.

**6 Conclusion and Recommendations**

National land policies have an important role in the promotion of agricultural productivity and exports because they can be used to bring down production costs through investment in technology thereby increasing export competitiveness. There is scope for lowering the cost of production in all countries through improvement in security of land tenure which enables farmers to access bank loans and invest in land and farm mechanisation. Mechanisation enables producers to benefit from economies of scale which have the effect of lowering average production costs. In Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa; it was found that the key role of land policy was to improve land tenure security as it has the effect of bringing down the cost of loan finance. In resettlement areas, property rights had to be transferable and enforceable so as to provide productive farmers scope to acquire more land and those unwilling to remain in farming the opportunity to exit the sector.

The analysis of the role of national land policies in the context of the AfCFTA revealed that production costs on the continent are high thereby making it difficult to replace the importation of cheaper products from abroad. There has not been much value addition to enable intra-African trade, let alone challenges relating to transport infrastructure, communication, corruption and bureaucratic delays at border posts; conditions which have favoured the importation of products from abroad. The paradox is that African countries need to industrialise in order to effectively participate in the AfCFTA, but the countries operate at the margins of global capital (Castells, 2000). To date, the African periphery has not engaged in competitive industrialisation.

This research has contributed to the implementation of the AfCFTA through bringing to the fore issues that need to be addressed by national land policies in order to lower production costs on the continent, thereby making exports competitive. The issues that need to be addressed are land tenure insecurity, investment in land, technology and training, agro-processing and manufacturing. It is through value addition to products and manufacturing of essential industrial goods, that African countries can effectively participate in the AfCFTA.

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**10. KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Land Policy:** The set of agreed principles to govern ownership (or access to), use and management of land resources to enhance their productivity and contribution to social, economic, political and environmental development and poverty alleviation.

**Agricultural Productivity:** Is measured as the ratio of agricultural outputs to inputs.

**Land tenure security:** certainty that a landholder’s rights will be recognised by others and protected in cases of specific challenges, that is, it guarantees enforceability of claims to land that are supported by national regulatory and legal frameworks.