
COMMENTS ON MR. DAVID H. COOPER'S PRESENTATION³

BY

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COMMENTS BY DR. C.F. LE CLUS

- a) Mr. Cooper's basic premise is that land reform will alleviate rural poverty and food insecurity, but he also emphasises that land reform needs to be augmented by comprehensive support services.
- b) He very clearly shows the horrific extent of rural poverty, food insecurity and general social backwardness in South Africa, and there can be no doubt in any of our minds that this state of affairs cannot be tolerated. We must all accept a commitment for the alleviation of the plight of South Africa's poor, including those in rural areas. The question is how to do it.
- c) Mr. Cooper lists some very serious constraints in this regard, namely:
 - Virtually no room for horizontal expansion in agriculture;
 - Serious degradation of agricultural resources in especially black rural areas through over grazing, poor cultural practices, lack of technology, lack of funds, urgent need for current consumption in order to stave off hunger and starvation, and
 - In commercial areas, over production of maize and other foodstuffs due, according to him, to government support and protection which is now likely to disappear. He foresees that we will suffer domestic shortages of basic foods on a regular basis within six years, which will cause food prices to rise.

- d) According to Mr. Cooper, South Africa's economic crisis is characterised by economic stagnation, declining investment, falling real incomes, growing unemployment, and large income disparities. The main question, however, is why? The answer lies in gross government over-expenditure, high taxes, high interest rates, high domestic protection and, especially lately, escalating labour costs and crime. Relative to these factors, the years of international boycotts and sanctions had in fact played a minor role. At this stage gross domestic product (GDP) growth is created in the tertiary sectors of the economy.

COMMENTS BY PROF. JERRY B. ECKERT

David Cooper and Johan van Zyl are to be congratulated for their thought provoking paper introducing the topic of food security in this country. They have raised a wide array of issues of critical importance and in doing so, have placed food security squarely on the policy agenda. Their detailed treatment of household and production conditions of the rural "food insecure" is particularly illuminating since it shows the difficult environmental conditions which contribute to food insecurity and under which that problem must be solved.

The paper provides two possible estimates of the number of food insecure. One is based on the number of people below the minimum income level which totals some 16,8 million. The second, a figure of 2,3 million, is based on anthro-

³ Mr. Cooper's presentation of the paper on *The influence of land reform and food security and food self-sufficiency in South Africa*, with his changes to the published paper, is unfortunately not available for publication. The comments published was made on Mr. Cooper's address.

pomorphic measurements taken of the population. While the former figure may serve to hoist a red flag over food insecurity, it is the latter that should be used to guide policy and programme formulation. Minimum income calculations, the so-called "poverty line", are estimated globally and globally tend to over-estimate the severity of a number of issues. While there is no denying that millions of people are in poverty in South Africa, there is also no direct correspondence between an arbitrary income threshold as estimated by CSS and the number of people who really are nutritionally at risk.

The paper's title leaves the reader with somewhat greater expectations than it satisfies. While the descriptions of the extent, characteristics and determinants of rural food insecurity are good, even excellent in places, relationships between this critical issue and land reform are hardly discussed. While the White Paper on Land Reform has not yet been released, the skeleton of forthcoming policy is already relatively predictable (Eckert, 1994a). The three policy directions recently outlined by the Deputy Minister for Land Affairs (Meyer, 1994) focus one's thinking on this issue. First, under the policy of strengthening land rights in the former homelands and other communal areas, this should lead to the possibility of more intensive farming based on higher levels of input use and operating capital. To the extent this occurs, it can only lead to increasing food security in these areas.

With respect to the other two thrusts in land policy⁴, the question of the impact on household food security depends on how food secure the new claimants/owners are at present. It seems legitimate, however, to assume that few households will obtain land for whatever purposes if it involves a reduction in their household food security. Thus, normal human rationality stands to insure that new land access can only improve food security if measured at the household level.

However, food security is not only a household issue. One wonders if the paper's almost exclusive focus on the rural food insecure might not be a major oversight. While land reform can be seen primarily as a rural issue⁵ food security is

⁴ Restitution of rights to victims of forced removals and other racially based policies and redistribution of land, largely through assisted market based policies.

⁵ Although there are very significant urban dimensions to the land question as well

NOT! Food security has regional, urban and national dimensions that cannot be ignored. In this connection, one must ask what impact will land policy have on overall food balances, food distribution and food affordability. Hunger is fully as much an issue of distribution and poverty as it is a production question. But, the consequences of land reform on food balances, regionally and nationally, has not yet been illuminated by research.

Among the unanswered questions are the following:

- Who will surface as first in the queue for new land titles and what will be their level of farming skill?
- What set of incentives will determine the intensity of land use by new owners?
- What land will be involved, what is its productive potential, and how productively is it currently being used? What will be its future productivity under new ownership?

One must temper expectations with a heavy dose of reality and this is especially true in the case of the land question. It may be that land policies of the past prevented, even eliminated, small farm agriculture outside the homelands. This does not necessarily mean that conditions exist under a democratic dispensation that will sustain a viable, surplus generating small farm sector.

Most emerging farmers will be "limited resource farmers". Their farming practices differ from commercial agriculture in several ways. In general, they will:

- use relatively lower levels of variable inputs,
- use relatively less machinery,
- use relatively more labour,
- are severely restricted in their use of capital,
- have lower yields,
- are not necessarily less efficient, and
- are less risky (Eckert, 1994b, adapted by Van Zyl, 1994).

A likely managerial strategy will be to substitute labour for capital wherever possible. Appropriate technologies for these conditions will have to be characterized by divisibility or smaller scale, low capital outlay, easy maintenance or maintenance.

nance free, useable by women and useful for multiple purposes. Furthermore, the relative attractiveness of off-farm employment and what this means in terms of allocating only residual labour inputs to farming is a particular and well established characteristic of rural economies in Southern Africa (Low, 1986). The question of food security, as measured beyond the household level, obviously remains to be answered.

In closing, I must thank David Cooper and Johan van Zyl for a paper that stimulates a considerable amount of thought. South Africa is properly abandoning the policy of food self-sufficiency for the more comprehensive policy of food security. These few comments are intended, not so much as criticism, but to contribute to further cogitation and dialogue on the critically important issue of food security.

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COMMENTS BY MR. CLIVE A. NICHOLSON

The basic premise is that most people in South Africa are food insecure, despite South Africa's food self-sufficiency. In fact, 18 million people are currently below the breadline!

Taking the high population growth rate into account as well as the urbanisation rate (second to none in Africa), is it surprising that most people in South Africa are food insecure taking the complicating factors of squatting, misuse of agricultural land and poverty into account?

The South African demographic situation is currently predicted to be as follows in future:

1994	2010
Total 40 million	Total 60 million
60% urban	70% urban

What can be done to overcome the problem? Land reform is a possible solution, but we contend that land reform for agricultural use cannot occur without comprehensive, directed farmer support services that CAN be delivered. Here is where focus comes in ... focus on our REAL, committed, commercially oriented farmers, not taking scale or size into account.

In fact, land reform is necessary, but not sufficient.

Farmer support is ESSENTIAL to alleviate food security. If this is the case, then IMPLEMENTABLE, FARMER SUPPORT DELIVERY SYSTEMS must be put in place together with our real farmers. This will allow the attainment of our agricultural potential in all areas and provinces.

The FARMER FOUNDATION, in partnership with the agricultural service, support and supply industry, will be able to deliver self-sustaining commercial farmers on available agricultural land. This implies that these new-entry or existing smaller scale or developing farmers will be linked to all necessary resources in the interests of efficient agricultural production. We therefore advocate the linking or integration of resources and needs into a mutually responsible (farmer and industry) farmer support delivery system by means of the AGRILINK PROGRAMME.