Ensuring Access to Water for Food Production by Emerging Farmers in South Africa: Are We There Yet?

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PRESENTATION MADE AT THE ANNUAL WATERNET SYMPOSIUM
WALVIS BAY, 23-27 OCT. 2017
Outline

1. Introduction
2. Study objectives
3. Methodology
4. Study sites
5. Findings
6. Discussion & Conclusion
INTRODUCTION

• Land & Water Reforms a key feature of historical redress in post-apartheid RSA since 1996.
• Reform complex & historically very emotive subject.
• At least 70% of the people categorized as the poorest are in rural areas.
• Reforms present an opportunity to uplift their livelihoods.
• Equitable re-distribution of the nation’s means of agricultural production.
• Transfer of substantial amounts of commercial farm land from whites to blacks e.g.1994 Target: Redistribute 30% (26M Ha) by 2014.
INTRO CONT’: THE PROBLEM

• The Cohort of ‘new’ black commercial farmers actively engaged in productive irrigated agriculture has not materialized – why?
• Several technical & institutional challenges that hinder the new farmers’ agricultural production potential.
• Access to water not guaranteed yet very crucial for commercial farming.
Objectives of the study

• To examine the reform process & generate empirical data that reveals the impacts of reforms on livelihoods;

• To interrogate the viability of the ‘new’ farms with special focus on their production levels;

• To understand & articulate the opportunities & challenges evident in the landscape of water access & use;

• Bringing a sharper focus to bear on the theoretical foundations on which rural transformation in the country is based;

• Inform policy & practice.
METHODOLOGY

- Deployed secondary & participatory primary data collection methods to enable detailed articulation of emerging farmers’ water access.
- Interviewed 60 reps from randomly selected small-scale redistributed farm households to profile their livelihoods & commercial agric activities on the farms.
- Direct observation: spend time on the selected farms & interacted with the farmers.
- Interviewed 20 purposively selected key informants - officials from national & local gvt dealing with water; devt agencies; relevant provincial gvt depts; agric. ext. officers; Chiefs & Village Heads.
Main focus on:

- Barriers & opportunities for access or ownership of water.
- Post-land transfer support systems for water devt.
- Institutions at national & local levels.
- Factors influencing water use & farm production; &
- Options for improving access to water & use by the emerging farmers.
Key variables considered

(i) The farm is occupied & running as a single commercial agric. entity;

(ii) The farmer has the required infrastructure & is using irrigation for commercial crop and/ livestock production rather than just for subsistence purposes, with access to a reliable source of water assured;

(iii) The household is actually benefiting from stocks & flows of food & income arising from commercial water use;

(iv) The farmer has a water license;

(v) The farmer exhibits confidence in the water supply & irrigation system, with clear plans in place to continue sustaining the system.
STUDY SITES: Bela-Bela & Groblersdal

Map showing locations of Bela-Bela, Groblersdal, Pretoria, and Polokwane in Limpopo Province.
STUDY FINDINGS

• Policy & legislation relatively clear on what should be done, esp equity & redress objectives.
• These clearly articulated in the NWA 1998;
• A powerful set of land & water reform legislation (considered world-class);
• **Certainly no shortage of legislation & policy.**
• **Implementation is the challenge – maybe we have too many uncoordinated policies!!**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraint</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>medium</th>
<th>High (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to water</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>35 (58.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Funding</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>39 (65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>44 (73.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension support services</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrigation infrastructure</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>35 (58.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to energy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>35 (58.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming inputs</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming machinery &amp; implements</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fencing</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markets</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roads</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-harvest storage</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Status of access to water for farms in the 2 study sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to water for irrigation possible (but no productive use/ no water license/ irrigation equipment unavailable)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No access to water for irrigation at all (physical scarcity)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to water for irrigation possible (water license obtained – productive use of water being made)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STUDY FINDINGS CONT’

• When using our criteria for success, there are more cases of failure (80%) than outright successful access (20%) - most of the farms not irrigating.
• 55% - irrigation equipment beyond their reach.
• 20% - vandalism of the irrigation equipment.
• At least 50% - inadequate knowledge of irrigation needs for their farms.
• Water license application process was deemed very long (taking more than 2 years in some cases).
• Recognition of existing water uses – maintaining the status quo & reallocation of water from the “haves” to the “have-nots” was not prioritised.
STUDY FINDINGS CONT’

• Initially land and water reforms run separately – limited room for integrated planning – subsequent efforts ad hoc, fragmented & hardly successful;
• Much more focus on the regulatory role of the DWA at the expense of water infrastructure devt for emerging farmers;
• Overall, the majority of the farms are not using water for productive purposes.
DISCUSSION

• Several technical & institutional challenges are apparent.
• Support programs rolled out to support the emerging farmers inadequate.
• Poor, decaying / vandalised irrigation infrastructure.
• Main crops produced are for subsistence rather than commercial purposes.
• In many cases, due to the lack of water, the farmers end up planting much smaller areas using hosepipes.
• Leasing of redistributed farms to white commercial farmers on the increase.
• Our observations show that the results are skewed more towards failures than success
CONCLUSION

• Reforms’ contribution to household food security & rural transformation remains in question.

• Access to water an ongoing challenge – we are certainly not there yet!

• Too many farms underperforming or not functioning at all.

• More structured & well-thought-out support systems required for sustainable access & use of water
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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