

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



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Outline

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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



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- 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.

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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

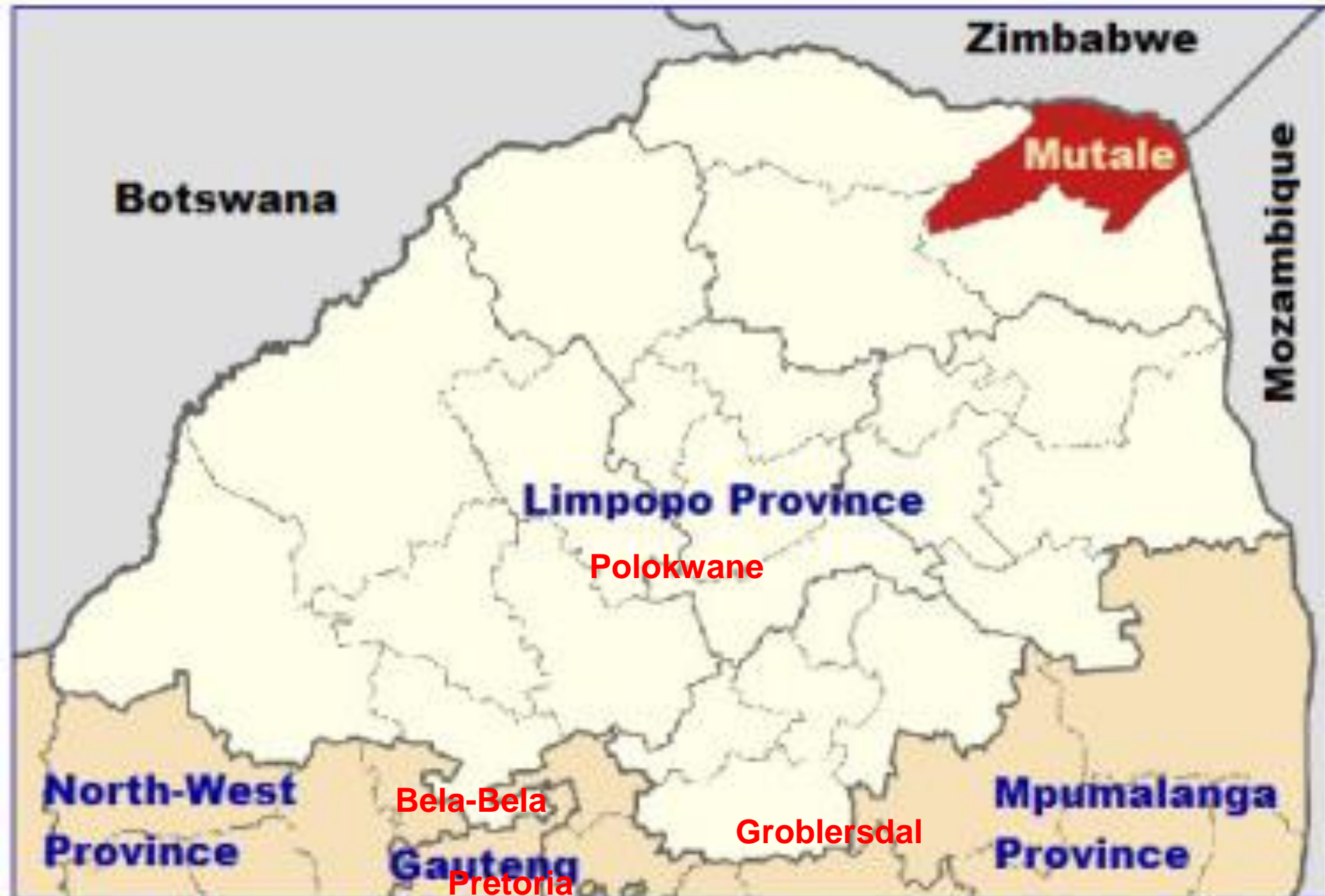


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- (i) The farm is occupied & running as a single commercial agric. entity;
- (ii) The farmer has the required infrastructure & is using irrigation for commercial crop and/ livestock production rather than just for subsistence purposes, with access 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



STUDY FINDINGS



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- 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!!**



		Severity levels	
Constraint	Low	medium	High (%)
Access to water	13	12	35 (58.3)
Lack of Funding	2	19	39 (65)
Lack of knowledge	3	13	44 (73.3)
Extension support services	32	12	6
Irrigation infrastructure	3	22	35 (58.3)
Access to energy	7	18	35 (58.3)
Farming inputs	12	15	33
Farming machinery & implements	9	18	33
Labour	40	13	7
Fencing	11	20	29
Markets	27	5	28
Roads	35	18	7
Post-harvest storage	22	20	18
Transport	28	20	12

N = 60

Table 1: Status of access to water for farms in the 2 study sites

Variable	No.	%
Access to water for irrigation possible (but no productive use/ no water license/ irrigation equipment unavailable)	36	60.00
No access to water for irrigation at all (physical scarcity)	12	20.00
Access to water for irrigation possible (water license obtained – productive use of water being made)	12	20.00
TOTAL	60	100

STUDY FINDINGS CONT'



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- 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'



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- 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



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- 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



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- 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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