

Food Security Programmes

Richard K BULLARD, United Kingdom and Sam ZHOU, Zimbabwe

Key words: food security, land reform, land surveying, land policy, land administration.

SUMMARY

It is a desire of all countries to become self sufficient in the production of food for their population. For a number of reasons this is not always possible. The increasing population of countries, especially those in the developing countries can mean that the food producers cannot keep up with the demand. The climatic changes experienced worldwide have also brought about drought in countries that already experienced regular shortages of rain which is now occurring at more regular intervals.

There is increasing reliance on food support from external agencies which cannot benefit the country receiving aid. This process undermines the existing production, the distribution process both wholesale and retail.

For those in the survey profession their primary method to alleviate food shortages is to ensure that sufficient land is made available to produce the food, ideally to satisfy the total needs for a country. To achieve the maximum food production will necessitate that land distribution will be undertaken and allocated to those who have the appropriate skills and experience in farming. Where commercial and co-operative (state or private) farms exist they should be retained where they can be shown to produce higher yields and provide employment for the rural population.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Despite the title containing the word 'food' many of persons involved in Food Security Programmes (FSP) are from the surveying profession. Many of the projects for FSP include the broader aspects of agricultural production of which land policy becomes an important issue. Those surveyors involved in land reform, land policy and land administration provides an important contribution to the FSP.

It is an over simplification to simply provide more food to a country with shortages and those in need, especially when it is provided from outside sources thereby undermining the local market. This situation, food reliability, should be seen as an admission of defeat when the agricultural community is no longer able to supply the population with food. However, with periodic drought and other climatic disasters even the best prepared country may need to be supported with outside assistance in the short term.

The methods of poverty eradication in rural areas have to date been centred around land reform and land distribution, in the process ideally giving the landless sufficient land for their personal needs. This policy can, however, be detrimental and at cross-purposes to the FSP because the total amount of food produced in the process in a country might be less than that achieved by a land policy which retains commercial farms or other forms of land allocation and ownership.

In the developed world concern is about achieving full employment, where percentages of persons unemployed are important figures in a country and can even contribute towards the result of democratic elections. Issues about who owns land are less likely to be heard because the majority of persons are usually in employment and have access to food. In the past many people drifted to the towns abandoning their smallholdings in the process. The rural poor lost their land to the rural rich by fair means and foul finishing up in the urban slums and employed where possible in low paid jobs that were created during an industrial revolution. This is history, although examples still persist into the 21st Century.

Implementing a land reform scheme is a common approach to solving food security issues, unfortunately it is used by the politicians who should probably leave it well alone. A recent example, Land Reform in Scotland which will allow crofters to purchase land illustrates this issue. Galson Estate on Lewis in Scotland which has 1,000 crofters paying pepper corn rents for their 4 to 9 hectares of thin soiled wind swept land. A previous owner had offered to sell the land to the crofters but they were not interested. If it was not for Amec wishing to build the largest wind farm in Europe in Lewis, then the ownership situation would probably not change. Now that the crofters have the opportunity to receive income from the land they are seeking ownership through the new land reform legislation. This is surely not what was intended when the politicians implemented the Act (Whitworth 2003).

2. LAND ISSUES AND FOOD SECURITY

Today many of those in developing countries need land because they have no employment and are in the same plight as those in the past in developed countries. Rural land is seen as an alternative to employment and is expected to provide food for each family unit and a surplus which is sold to provide luxuries. Little thought may be given to others who might need food, especially those in the urban areas without land to provide food for themselves. This is not a suitable way to organise essential food supply in countries where increasing numbers live in urban areas (Moore 2002). Land when it is distributed must be to persons who have the training, qualifications and experience to produce food in surplus to their own requirements, and supplying to those without the opportunity to be self reliant, especially to those in the urban community. These farmers will need capital, and security of tenure to raise funds to purchase the machinery, seeds, stock etc with which to produce and market their crops. There will always be a role for smallholdings but they are unlikely to satisfy the country's home consumption and certainly unable to contribute to an export market.

The problem that confronts the World is that there is a need to find ways to fight hunger and also to reduce poverty. In the process of resolving these problems the food security must be a major priority. It is estimated that some 800 million people remain seriously undernourished and of these a high proportion are in developing countries, particularly in Africa.

Examples of the action currently being undertaken in Georgia and Zimbabwe are given to compare the different approaches and solutions to each country's food security problems.

3. ISSUES OF LAND REFORM AND FOOD SECURITY IN GEORGIA

Georgia has one of the oldest traditions of settled agriculture in the World, and today agriculture is the main pillar of the Georgian economy, accounting for an increasing share of GDP, now about 30 per cent. This sector also occupies around 55 per cent of the total number of employed persons in the population (Kirvalidze 2002).

Domestic agricultural output could be expanded significantly through improved government policies, better farm management and more effective marketing (Kirvalidze 2002). Major changes being undertaken include, the reform of agricultural taxation, and new banking and credit arrangements in rural areas.

Unlike Zimbabwe with large commercial farms owned by a minority, Georgia had in the past large co-operatives (87 per cent of land) which were controlled by the State and managed by party leaders. Of the remaining land 6 per cent was used as household plots by villagers. At the end of the FSU (Former Soviet Union) they experienced the problem of allocating land (Bullard 2000b).

The allocation of land was started in 1992 and attempted to bring the 0.25 hectares of former farm workers up to 1.25 hectares. The complex allocation took little account of soil variations or crop yields (Bullard 2000a).

The land distribution can now be seen as being disruptive and not well thought out leaving occupants dissatisfied with their land ownership. The allocation process has effectively led to fragmentation of the former co-operatives. Despite this process the small land parcels should be retained where food is being produced to ensure the food security of owners and allowing surplus to be marketed in urban areas.

The solution in Georgia should be to halt the present land distribution to prevent further fragmentation taking place. Ensure that the taxes being collected arrived at the Ministry of Finance and not to intermediaries. There were important economic justifications for the land distribution process, economic and social. The economic justification was to continue to privatize, no more free land to be allocated and charging economic rents.

The social justification of continuing land allocation was to create more employment and income for those living in rural areas. The creation of food co-operatives was a further process to be encouraged (Bullard 2000a).

4. ISSUES OF LAND REFORM AND FOOD SECURITY IN ZIMBABWE

By comparison with Georgia, Zimbabwe has one of the more recent traditions of settled agriculture, relying in the past with a nomadic lifestyle that did not encourage the production of crops leading to settlements. The exceptions of the Zimbabwe and Khami ruins and their associated culture show that limited permanent settlement dates back to the 1200s but was probably not undertaken countrywide.

Though now free from colonial rule, racial segregation and discrimination, freedom from poverty and hunger continue to elude the people of Zimbabwe and the entire southern African region. The Government of Zimbabwe set about a Fast Track Land Acquisition and Resettlement Programme in July 2000. The objective was to fight poverty by allowing people to directly work on their own productive and fertile land (Mugabe 2002). It was the intention of the government to ensure that the country's indigenous population should own land. While in the past the country relied on a small number of commercial farmers there are now 260,000 families on varying sizes of land, sharing a total of 12 million hectares of prime agricultural land (Mugbe 2002).

The other delegates at the World Food Summit treated the above statements by Mugabe with scorn. Instead of blaming the drought, it was considered by many that the food shortages had been caused through the illegal seizures of commercial farms. This should however be linked to the other issues around the social and political costs of the current land distribution pattern and the general consensus that it is not sustainable. Other questions are also emerging in relation to the approach and method chosen by the government of Zimbabwe to handle the land question, a vital and basic resource for food security.

On Wednesday the 5th February, Joseph Made, Lands, Agriculture and Rural Settlement Minister in Zimbabwe admitted that the land reform programme, which had contributed to the food crisis in the country, was chaotic (Daily News 2003). The need for assistance with land acquisition by donors and the international community is also becoming apparent as a

way forward in supporting the national and regional strategy towards food security and poverty alleviation.

From the above situation it is clear that the present land allocation policy, aggravated by the drought, has not been successful. This has been indicated by the cessation of financial sponsorship from international agencies including the World Bank, the IMF and the EC.

The World Bank's approach was to be to finance two types of settlement approaches:-

Community initiated, market assisted approach that would have communities identify land, negotiate with owners, and make proposals for development to the government.

A variety of other approaches that include the development of available land acquired by the government, private sector organizations, and civic society.

The objective of the above land reform proposals according to World Bank was to support efforts to reduce poverty, contribute to social, political and economic stability, and increase agricultural productivity in the country.

The actions above, as and when they are allowed to be carried out, will certainly improve the food security situation in Zimbabwe.

5. EUROPEAN COMMISSION SUPPORT FOR ZIMBABWE

A proposal from the EC from the SADC Food Security Training Programme Co-ordinating Unit is awaiting implementation when the situation in Zimbabwe is more ready for support. The primary objective of the activity would be to improve the institutional capacity at all levels. There is a shortage of skilled and experienced staff (worsened by the AIDS epidemic), especially at the technical and professional level.

The food security should be developed within the following principles:-

- The public sector should only supply goods and services which would otherwise be under supplied by the private sector or the non-for-profit sector.
- Subsidiarity – do only those things at regional level which can not be done at national level, and do those things at national level which can not be done at local level.
- Promote the important role of women.
- Involve the multiplicity of stakeholders in the private and not-for-profit sector, as well as in the public sectors.
- Take into account the economic and ecological diversity of the region which requires different food security strategies.

The training programme should use the above principles in particular in the area of agriculture and natural resources. The need to provide land parcels that suit the principles is also evident, that commercial farms and smallholdings will be required.

The training programme will be linked into the SADC Regional Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Policy Analysis and Research Network. Many of the SADC countries are currently experiencing food security problems, for some the severe drought is the major cause, but lack planning and adequate land reform may be other factors.

6. FOOD SECURITY SOLUTIONS FOR ZIMBABWE

A more equitable land distribution is certainly required and this does not exclude the redistribution of land on a willing seller willing buyer process. The indiscriminate seizure of commercial farms has not achieved anything but short term political actions that do not benefit the country; it certainly damages its standing and does not feed its people.

It is also accepted that small farms can be more productive than large commercial farms, with the proviso that the farmers are equally skilled at farming. It is also accepted that commercial farming suits grain production, but because this heavily relies on mechanization the process uses fewer farm workers per unit area than would a smallholding.

Commercial farms have been acquired by the Zimbabwe Government in the past could have been subdivided and this process would have contributed enormously to the process of land distribution (Zhou 2002). It is questionable if there is currently any place for legal subdivision in the face of the current massive compulsory acquisition and subsequent distribution by the government. The solution might be by looking into other options which are available to both government and other stakeholders.

The creation of viable economic land parcels through the formal process of subdivision remains the only balanced, fair, and viable legal option that can guarantee the ownership rights for the many large scale land holders who stand to lose out in the current deadlock. The large scale farmers would also benefit from the creation of legal small and medium scale viable farms that would be complimentary to their own farming activities.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The survey profession has an ongoing opportunity to be involved in the process of food security, especially with the aspects of land reform and land tenure. It is well established that all countries experience the need for land reform. Ideally the application should be kept out of the political agenda as currently happens in Zimbabwe. Land reform should not be allowed to become a political issue but be governed and implemented by the professions.

The creation of legal small and medium scale farms can continue despite the present political situation. By providing the security of title, the ability to acquire capital against title, the new farmers can support the food security of the country.

The design of the subdivision process should be such that a non aggressive political objective is achieved and in the process help restore the country's economy. Food exports should be encouraged when the local food security provision is satisfied. Increasing employment in the agricultural sector.

It will be important that in the process of land distribution that the food production targets are both realistic and support is given to farmers to assist them in its achievement.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Richard Bullard is a Researcher in the Department of the Built Environment at Anglia Polytechnic University APU and also works as a freelance consultant specialising in land related issues. Started his surveying career in Zimbabwe and to date has worked in 41 countries. Completed Masters in Engineering by research at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and Doctorate at Sheffield University. Worked in many of the activities of surveying including, cadastral, engineering, land management, photogrammetry, remote sensing, and topographical survey. Was a former national delegate, appointed by the

RICS, to FIG and Secretary of Commission 2 (Professional Education) and currently a corresponding member of Commission 7 (Cadastre and Land Management). Is a Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, and a Fellow of the Survey Institute of Zimbabwe. The Chair of the Geomatics Faculty Board at the RICS and a Member of its Executive. An RICS APC examiner. With the European Faculty of Land Use and Development and is a Professor in *Systemes d'Information du Territoire*. Main interests in consultancy and research include land reform, land management, land consolidation and coastal zone management. Particular interest in the multidisciplinary aspects of land development for countries in transition and those in the developing world. Is the author of books, chapters and publications in the above fields of activity. A member of the editorial panel of International Land Management Series, published by Ashgate Publishing.

Sam Zhou, a part time research assistant at the University of Zimbabwe is also working as a land surveyor currently working in Botswana and Zimbabwe. Is currently negotiating registration for a PhD at APU. He completed his BSc (Land Surveying) at the University of Lagos, Nigeria, and MSc (Land Surveying – specialising in Land Management) at University of Natal, South Africa. Is a former President of the Survey Institute of Zimbabwe, of which he is currently a Fellow, and Chairman of the Zimbabwe Council of Land Surveyors. Has undertaken research and consultancy with World Bank, Land Tenure Center, University of Wisconsin Madison, and US A.I.D. Has been a lecturer in Surveying at Harare Polytechnic. Was on Zimbabwe Government Panels to investigate future land reform policy. His interests are in land management and land reform.

CONTACTS

Prof Dr Richard K Bullard
Department of Built Environment,
Anglia Polytechnic University,
Bishop Hall Lane, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1SQ
UNITED KINGDOM
Tel +44 (0) 1245 233 351
Fax +44 (0) 1245 233 751
E-mail richard.bullard@boltblue.com
Web site www.apu.ac.uk

Sam Zhou
Survey Institute of Zimbabwe
P.O.Box 6265, Harare
and
Department of Geomatics and Surveying
University of Zimbabwe
P.O.Box MP167, Mount Pleasant, Harare
ZIMBABWE
Tel. +263 4 774 820
Fax + 263 4 754 697
Email: zhou@ecoweb.co.zw