

**THE LAND QUESTION:**

**Restitution, Reconciliation and Livelihood -**

**Some political economic and agro economic issues**

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THE LAND QUESTION: Restitution, Reconciliation and Livelihood, Some  
Political Economic and Agro Economic Issues

By Reginald Herbold Green

All we want is to go on living on the land  
... our family's land for three generations.

- Namibian Rancher

I know where my grandfather grazed our cattle  
before the Germans came.

- Namibian Would-Be Rancher

The war that raged the length and breadth of  
this land was first and foremost a war about  
economic justice.

- Hage Geingob, Prime  
Minister of Namibia

On a cloth untrue  
With a twisted cue  
And elliptical billiard balls.

- Gilbert and Sullivan

I.

The Land Questions - Prolegomenon

There is not one land question in Namibia, there are at least four. The first pair are about past injustice - the political question of who owns the land and the history of land theft and of labour theft to work the land. The second pair are about technico economic limits: how can the perhaps two-thirds of Namibian households partly or fully dependent on the land achieve decent livelihoods and what can and cannot be done with (not to or against) the land and how?

These questions are interlinked. None can be resolved without reference to the others. It is no use to claim that the second pair are technical and

apolitical and that their answers should dominate policy in respect to the first pair. Whatever caution means, it does not mean denying the existence of a problem for ten years while explosive forces build up and then erupt. But nor does it serve any purpose to argue that land ownership must be determined on the basis of redeeming history through literal reversal of land theft or to descendants of previous users alternatively (very alternatively as to who gets the land) by turning ranches over to present hired workers and northern landless or near landless would be mixed farmer/ranchers without regard to the technical feasibility or poor rural household livelihood implications or, indeed, to the political clash inherent in the two very different groups of putative recipients. Economic justice for Namibia must encompass empowering this generation and its children to attain decent livelihoods as well as (rather more than?) providing retrospective revenge to their ancestors of a century ago at the expense of persons then fifty years unborn. Reconciliation cannot be made in either the wasteland of denying the need to redress history or the other wasteland or of denial of the limits on the present also imposed by history.

The intelligent technical person will not seek to ignore 'political' issues but to understand them in order to see what technical proposals might help to ease political and social dilemmas. Nor will the perceptive politician dismiss the technical as trivial or a synonym for maintaining injustice. The incomes of 200,000-300,000 persons (40,000 to 60,000 households) turn on the large ranching sector's sustained productivity, most ranches can neither be converted to mixed farming nor be viable as 250 hectare mini-ranches. Those too are political and social as well as economic facts.

#### Land, Rural: Reform, Development - Four Themes

Land reform, rural reform, land development and rural development are sometimes rather fuzzily discussed as if they were the same thing. That is not the case and to fail to recognise the differences can be unhelpful.

Land reform is about equitable access to land. In the context of past land theft it is partly about redress and reversal. But because land (usable land) can be 'created' (made accessible) it is not only about shifting existing land.

Nor is land reform unproblematic. Not every household can be given access to land adequate (even in principle) to provide them a decent livelihood. And in Namibia it is a fact that many ranches are quite unsuitable for genuine technico agronomic reasons for the mixed farming many in the Ovambo and Kavango areas desire access to land to practice.

Land development is about production and its sustainability (ecology) or more precisely about raising and transforming them. It is likely to be needed for land reform to be successful in enabling those gaining access to benefit from it, but is usually a priority even when land reform is not.

Land development includes creating usable land from useless - e.g. reclamation, irrigation and boreholes to provide human and herd water. It is also about improving land quality - e.g. restoring trees, bushes, shrubs and pasture quality and reducing vulnerability to erosion. Related is providing or making known new uses whether by agronomic means or by creating physical, market and price infrastructure to make the new uses practicable (e.g. roads) and profitable (e.g. 1990-1991 sorghum buying points and guaranteed price).

Thus land development is about production and productivity (for self-provisioning and for commercialisation, for next year and for next century). It is about land, its quality, its uses and its survival, but also about access to and uses of complementary resources (including knowledge and markets).

Rural Reform is about rural production, distribution and social relations - including aspects beyond land and agriculture. Access to land is one aspect but so are access to decently paid employment and to basic services and so are employer-employee and rural resident-public servant-merchant relationships. Distribution matters but so does production, basically because without production there is nothing to distribute but also because redistribution out of enhanced production is much easier (politically, socially and technically) than redistribution out of stagnant or declining production.

Land and livelihood are important in Namibia. So are social relations - rather more broadly than the ranch worker/ranch holder nexus. But for that reason both agricultural production and non-agricultural services and livelihoods are important too. Both the small and large output constraints

which must be relaxed if worker (whether worker/landholder or worker/wage earner) incomes are to be raised sustainably, significantly and cumulatively. Further, the room for relaxation is far from infinite (and in the short run often far from obvious) so that both access to basic services and to non-agricultural income (to complement agricultural at regional, and frequently at household and individual worker, levels) are integral to rural reform and, indeed, to the continued viability of many farming/farm working households.

Rural Development does comprise rural reform at least in any context such as Namibia in which rural reform is an urgent priority. Development is about people - its proper test is Adam Smith's that no nation can be great and prosperous the majority of whose people are poor and miserable. Rural Namibia does not pass that test today. As the Prime Minister has recently reminded us, that failure was a central cause of two decades of war. Unless progress is made and seen to be made by those who are poor and miserable there will not be any context of commitment to hard work, of decent human and social relations, of law and order, of reconciliation in which rural development - even if defined in narrower productionist terms - is conceivable let alone attainable.

Rural development can also be seen as comprising land development plus human environment and capacity development (basic services, knowledge accountable local government and public servants) and development of non-agricultural employment/self-employment, infrastructure, production and services. However noxious the military economic base of the Oshakati-Ondangwa-Ongwediva triangle was in all other respects, the economic and livelihood consequences of its demise illustrate very clearly that local non-agricultural sectors matter a great deal both as providers of jobs, of self-employment opportunities and of markets.

Rural development therefore includes gender issues. These are equity (distribution), social relations (from household level outward) and production (discrimination on the basis of gender like that on the basis of race is objectionable on productive efficiency as well as moral grounds) issues. Doubtless some aspects (including severe use rights in respect to land) are rural or even land reform topics. But many cannot really be dealt with fully in the time perspective appropriate to other major reform issues.

To conflate these four themes into one is not helpful analytically or programmatically. But still less is their artificial isolation from one another especially if it is misused to set up development as an alternative to or, yet more implausibly, an antithesis to reform.

True, historically development with limited controlled social engineering of a reformist character has sometimes been a politically viable method of co-opting and demobilising forces seeking transformation and reform. Bismarckian Prussia/Germany at home (notably not in Deutsch Sudwes Afrika as it then was) illustrates that road with freeing of serfs, extension of basic health care, education and social security used to underpin the continued role of the junker landed aristocracy and the rise of the industrial hoch bourgeoisie in the service of German national reunification and expansion. But whatever one thinks of that approach normatively, it is objectively not workable in Namibia. No surer way to break the fragile structure and process of reconciliation could readily be devised than a pie in the sky half promise of gains from development tomorrow in return for a small handful of rand coins but no significant reform today.

The useful way of considering the four themes is likely to be to consider their overlaps, interpenetrations, complementarities and - yes - partial trade-offs. If for example, withdrawal of subsidies to large ranchers was taken beyond market interest rate application and termination of residence allowances to early charging at full cost for water and for veterinary, extension and research services, the impact on numbers and adequacy of livelihoods available for ranch workers would be almost certain to suffer dramatically and output and exports at least moderately. In that particular context the cost of very rapid changes which by themselves would be reforms would be inimical to rural development and have a high cost even in respect to the decent livelihoods component of rural reform.

Equally to argue that in the interests of development Swafleis should concentrate marketing within the 'traditional' area south of the "red line", and distribute all benefits of the nationally negotiated EEC beef protocol to its present clients in the name of 'development' is, at best, myopic. The "red line" is indeed historic but hardly agronomic or natural - as illustrated by its sudden 'adjustment' to include an FNDC mega-ranch rather untraditionally (or perhaps in terms of 1884-1988 Namibia history all too traditionally) carved out of former communal land. The present

clients (hardly members as Swafleis has historically been a self-perpetuating, non-participatory oligarchy dominated by its management and their rancher and politician allies) are defined by history not economic or technical inevitability. The "red line" like Swafleis present name and clientele are historic anachronisms. To defend them in the name of development is both to deny that development is about people and to invite explosive reactions by seeking to block both rural reform and rural development for a majority of Namibia's rural population. Even were Swafleis and the "red line" efficient in narrow production terms (they clearly are the opposite) the political and social cost of the trade-off against reform would be so high as to vitiate the supposed technical case.

However were a proposal made that half the gains were to go to cattle sellers, that Swafleis was to purchase in all regions (for tinning in zones from which veterinary requirements barred movement at any given time) and that the balance of the gains were to finance extended, strengthened, national veterinary control with the specific objective of eroding and eventually ending veterinary no go (more accurately no leave) zones would be another matter altogether. Reasonable persons could debate the exact balance between redistribution and reform support and production enhancement and incentives allocations, but some division is reasonable. Equally, informed persons would debate the means to expanding purchasing and the area covered by veterinarily clean zones but neither is in principle open to serious technical or normative objections. The nature of the debate/dialogue could thereby be transformed to one about optimising complementary gains. Not incidentally, such a debate would be likely to being a very different tone and one promoting, not eroding, reconciliation.

## II.

### Some Perspectives on The Land Question

The land question - like a rhinoceros - looks rather different depending on where the observer is standing and on what portion of its anatomy he is concentrating his/her attention. Each perspective has some particular insights - and each is partial. To view the land question from all angles and directions at once is almost as impossible as to do the same with a rhinoceros (and perhaps, albeit for different reasons, just as dangerous).



But because each perspective is both valuable and partial there is a need once each is viewed to set them beside each other toward synthesis building.

While the perspectives here are "disciplinary" (which is not the same thing as apolitical whether in intent or, even more surely, outcome) there are crosscutting perspectives based on social location. A rancher, a well paid ranch worker, a grossly exploited San seasonal worker, an established Okovango valley mahogo grower with regular commercialisable surplus, a landless 0-0-0 triangle resident, a Katatura worker and a Bethanien pensioner will all have political economic perspectives on the land question, but hardly identical ones.

Similarly, northern women with secure access to land as heads of household or as members of families and those with none, women with remittances to secure timely access to ploughing and those without, women heads of households in pastoral societies which traditionally bar women from owning large stock, women from barren southern dumping fields (no other words describe the present state of some), Windhoek domestic employees, Khomasdahl professional women and unemployed or marginally employed 0-0-0 triangle women will have socio economic perceptions of the land question different from each other and from those of their male counterparts.

From a political economic perspective the land question is predominantly one of an accumulated past which has become the perceived present - of land theft, of master-servant relationships, of the contract system. True, there are exceptions - some grazing rights were purchased a century ago at what were fair prices. True again, there have been alterations, many farm workers have their families with them, some are reasonably paid and housed. But the former are exceptions and the latter, if not uncommon, have not gone far enough and are not - or not yet - general and - crucially - are not yet perceived as a dominant trend. In any case, perceptions are facts until and unless they change and, as facts, are a component of political reality.

There is an alternative political economic perspective of the large rancher (not only the large white rancher) as a hard working, meritorious producer who makes two beasts graze and two jobs blossom where there were none or one before. One group, holding that view mine (not use) 'their' land, pasture and water, exploit and cheat 'their' employees and rule 'their'

clients with a rod (even if more commonly of words and rand today than of wood and leather as was not uncommon yesterday). That perspective is irreconcilable with the dominant one. But a different positive perception held by a group (like the previous one not all of European ancestry) who tend and seek to improve the land they use, work hard to achieve moderate affluence, pay and house the employees working for them decently, see them as human beings but do fear their livelihoods and homes will be snatched away. They and the dominant perspective can achieve reconciliation - not easily, especially in respect to land ownership/use rights, but genuinely.

And women (particularly black women - under the legal system affecting them white women can own or lease land in their own right even though the Afrikaner and rural German cultures are markedly patriarchal) have a political economic perspective marked by lack of secure access rights to land in their own right as contrasted to sub-rights in a male headed household or extended family and real limitations on land use because of historic forms (whether traditional, colonial or mixed) limiting access to ploughing capacity, large stock, markets and freedom to reside independently as household heads. These barriers are not uniform nor immutable (indeed both the contract system and the war against the system it underpinned and symbolised have eroded them) but they are both real enough and recently and uncertainly modified enough to shape perspectives.

A parallel but somewhat different political economic perspective turns on livelihoods, employment, the reduction and abolition of absolute poverty. It is not unrelated to the perception of historic wrong for present righting - 65% of Namibia's people are rural and 60% (not all rural) are absolutely poor even though Namibia is not, by world and especially not by Sub-Saharan African standards, a country with a poor level of developed productive forces per capita. But it is not identical - equitably paid jobs, adequate rural services and developing new land and non-agricultural rural incomes may be quite as high priorities as land redistribution from this perspective.

An ecological perspective centres on maintenance or enhancement of the productive (and human livelihood) capacity of the land and on the maintenance of a balance among wildlife, wilderness, ranching/cropping and domesticated land. Ecological perspectives vary across a wide spectrum from those placing high value on the survival of the anopheles mosquito

(and, therefore, not on that of African children) to those who see no value in nature except as an input into households and commercial economics. However, most positions fall well within both poles and do recognise both major ecological concerns.

Ecologically the history of land in Namibia is a near disaster threatening to become irreversible. In the communal areas the degradation of the ecology has been need (poverty and lack of access to knowledge) driven. If cutting the last bush to cook, and overgrazing or overtilling to eat are necessary to survive now, there is no choice to conserve vegetation or soil to protect future meals and future generation's meals. The knowledge that the actions are destructive and the belief that land is held in trust from ancestor to children avail nothing if not doing ecological damage now is to die. The dead can neither honour their ancestors nor nurture their children.

In the large ranch country ignorance and greed have been the agents of ecological destruction. Some farmers in them do believe in the land as deeply as many communal area farmers - others mine it and toss it aside as they do those they hire to work on it. Both have failed to understand the limits to the ecology's resilience. Near Windhoek in the 1890s many ranches had seasonal surface, and year round shallow well, water; few had packed surface soil and - therefore - few had severe gully and sheet erosion. One need not look very long nor very far (and not just on badly run ranches) to see the difference now.

The ecological perspective does not in itself prescribe how to avert and reverse damage. But it does warn that not blaming the needy for the damage they do is either humane or sane only in connection with empowering them (whether by new land, new techniques or new - non-land based - incomes) to halt the damage. Rural development is not an ecologist's normal core subject, but to face the ecological degradation of need without the tools of a relevant rural development (and quite probably also rural reform and land reform) strategy is usually a hopeless task. Equally the ecological perspective warns that raising large ranch costs (or cutting incomes) can readily topple them into the path of need based degradation. Given the historic record of low to negative returns on capital employed in much of the Namibian large ranching sector, the 1980s droughts and recent cost shifts (wages, interest, inputs), tending to outrun income gains (even

taking a portion of EEC access value into account) this is not a tendentious argument nor an unrealistic cause for concern.

It should be evident that an ecological perspective cannot be used to argue for blanket approval of large ranches and against communal/smallholder farms nor vice versa. There are examples of sound - and of disastrous - interaction with nature in both cases. Similarly, each offers options for better future performance. If it is argued that some techniques - e.g. holistic ranching - are suitable only for large ranches, this is perhaps a matter of research and perception bias more often than of true technical limitations. For example, men and boys (or perhaps dogs) are known and used substitutes for fences in controlling grazing and controlled grazing (not fenced paddocks as such) is the core of holistic ranching.

Socio-economic perspectives on the land question turn on at least three issues: creating (recreating) and preserving stable households; making room for stable female headed households beyond the professional sub-sector of the wage economy (and of business proprietorship); achieving an acceptable degree of inequality (presumably conditioned by how socially acceptable the floor level for the bottom - say - 20% or 40% of households is).

These issues all turn in large measure on land - as a source of basic or supplementary income, as a place to live, as an element in old age security. As noted above, they include an important cluster of gender issues. Clearly each issue has other components - household stability (reduction of instability) is an urban as well as a rural goal; not all female headed (any more than male headed) households will wish (or be able) to live on the lands; old age pensions should play an increasing role in old age security. But nor is it realistic to suppose viable interim solutions to any can be designed or achieved without addressing the land question at the level of praxis as well as of rhetoric.

This is especially true because the underlying values of most Namibians are rural. Farming is regarded as a normatively high status occupation even if economic constraints force many to choose other occupations. So too are rural services seen as important and dignified (even if professionally and financially less rewarding than urban). The desire to retire to ones own home place in the countryside is widespread (as is the practice). There is nothing normatively wrong with these values - albeit they are likely to become less dominant over time just as they have in continental Europe

since 1945 and more slowly in many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa since 1960. They do exist and they do influence action. Therefore the fact that they make land central to many if not most households and social groups is a valid factor to be considered in determining land policy and practice. Or at any rate it is unless one asserts that government should pursue modernisation by fiat whether the majority of Namibians wish it or not and that such bureaucratic social engineering is likely to be consistent with social stability, political accountability and economic efficiency. Experience elsewhere (in Western European welfare states as much as in former East German bureaucratic state capitalism and under the varied modernisation paradigms practised in and/or on most Sub-Saharan African states and peoples) casts grave doubts on any such assertions.

It is sometimes argued that the appropriate dominant perspective on the land question should be macroeconomic. That claim is probably valid in some contexts, but is much more problematic in the case of Namibia.

Land - or more accurately land as the base for ranching and cropping (hard rock and sand minerals are quite another matter and solid, fluid and/or gaseous hydrocarbons could become so) - is not basic to Namibia's gross domestic product (probably about 10% to 15% including self-provisioning and averaging over several years to allow for climatic fluctuations) nor to its exports (about the same probable range taking one year with another). Still less is it crucial for investible surplus generation (probably near nil net taking subsidies and inward remittance transfers into account). The same holds on government fiscal account. Nor would any conceivable economic transformation strategy be able to raise these proportions much.

But that is not the end of the story. Agriculture is dominant in providing employment/self-employment (perhaps 60% but rather more if urban workers who view their home place as their true residence are perceived as permanently rural even if transitorily urban). The majority of Namibian households today and until at least the end of the first decade of the next century will need substantial self-provisioning and/or cash incomes from agriculture if absolute poverty is to be eroded and - by 2010 - brought down to - say - 5%. Thus for the employment - income distribution - poverty cluster of macroeconomic goals and constraints agriculture, and, therefore, the land question is central. This does not in itself determine how to tackle that question - except, perhaps, to suggest a mixed strategy

conducive to both a healthier small farming sector and improved remuneration and other conditions for the core large ranch employee group.

Because agriculture is central at the levels noted, but not a generator of significant surpluses, serious investible surplus and recurrent subsidy allocation issues arise. The past allocation pattern to European farmers at true levels of up to R100 million a year (including cheap interest and capital grants) was doubtfully economically efficient, distributionally undoubtedly inequitable and politically unsustainable. Its passing is no cause for tears except to the extent that too sudden removal of subsidies lead to output and employment collapses (e.g. this may counsel phased reduction of water price subsidies). If limited (nationally affordable) price and market guarantees, provision of infrastructure-research-extension and input-technology-resettlement subsidies will help redistribute income equitably now and over time empower a growing number of small farmers to produce more to eat and to sell at plausible costs/prices, then there is as strong a case for them as for old age pensions. The issues are one of appropriate amounts, patterns and types - not of whether or no. Even as purist a neo-liberal economist as Milton Friedman would agree, even if his posited means of negative income taxes and access to market interest rate loans has fairly substantial problems as a complete set of instruments anywhere, let alone in Namibia.

Sectorally and regionally agriculture matters more than nationally. South and west of Windhoek and north of Tsumeb agriculture is the dominant source of direct output and of purchasing power for/inputs into other sectors (except for the coastal and Khorixas enclaves). Sectorally manufacturing needs crop (e.g. oilseeds, grain, tomatoes) and livestock (meat, hides and skins, pelts, wool) inputs to expand output and a buoyant agricultural sector to expand consumer and simple construction material as well as agricultural input, sales. And in respect to exports it is an intriguing fact that the vegetable oil and tomato sauce in tinned fish often represent nearly as high a share of ex-factory price as the fish. Similarly, the European game meat market might be a 1990s parallel to the 1980s exotic fruit and vegetable market breakthrough.

From a microeconomic angle the key issue in respect to land turns on the livelihoods of those who live and work on it as small farming households (or small farming/outside income households) and as wage employees.

Ultimately that depends on the technical productivity and economic viability of farms and ranches either on their own or with limited capital and temporary (disaster and rehabilitation) recurrent support costed as a livelihood support (social security) expenditure and at a level not crippling the fiscal position or surplus generation producing/supporting capacity of Namibia.

It is politically and socially more desirable and economically more efficient to spend some sum to enable farming to be viable to operators and employees than to have them unemployed in peri urban and urban centres while the land is increasingly abandoned. The plausible arguments are over amounts (overall and per family), efficiency (output and households income gains per rand spent) and related topics. This contention is partly contextually based - Namibia's main export, tax and investible surplus generating sector - mining - cannot provide large numbers of direct and indirect livelihoods except to the extent a portion of its surpluses are directed to services and other productive sectors. That is also the most plausible reading of Botswana's experience, albeit there support for empowering small farmers to augment production and income has been low, not very imaginative and basically not successful.

The nature of the micro economic parameters suggest that there should be no bias toward grain (as well as no bias against it) in agricultural strategy. If R2.5 million would generate production of R8 million of tomatoes and oilseeds leading to R6 million of rural incomes and R12 million of added exports (in tinned fish and meat) whereas the same amount would generate R6 million of grain with farm incomes up R4 million and import savings of R3 million then the tomatoes and oilseeds should be supported. Namibia needs self-reliance (pay its own way for domestic or imported) rather than self-sufficiency (produce all of its own) in respect to grain and the chief microeconomic concern in respect to the land lies in the decent livelihoods it can generate. This is not an argument against grain - e.g. the 1990/91 mahogo initiatives (albeit about 200% of import parity seems a rather high grower price) - what crops which small farmers in which zones can grow is a necessary parameter for policy determination if raising real incomes or real rural households, rather than a macroeconomic output aggregate, is the primary objective.

## III.

Issues and Areas: Commonalities and Diversities

The ecology, social relations, land use and land/land use right ownership patterns of Namibia are not uniform. Therefore the key issues in respect to the land question and the usable instruments for tackling it vary. For example, breaking up Caprivi 10 ha farms would make little sense, nor would seeking to develop horticulture near Warmbad in the absence of irrigation. Further, the land question is not fully describable in simple black and white terms. For example, the degree of inequality in cattle holdings and pasture use rights in the zone under Herero 'traditional' allocation procedures is very high indeed, so high as to constitute prima facie evidence of inequity and of the need for land tenure reform. Similarly, the Rehoboth ranching system is perhaps medium scale but in other respects it is a smudged carbon of the German/Boer built white ranching system, no less exploitative, just as master/servant in social relations, probably more impoverishing of hired workers.

But the underlying elements in the land question are nationwide: a history of land theft and deprivation of access for most Namibians, low land worker incomes (whether as small farmers, divided households or ranch employees), low productivity and production related to lack of knowledge acquisition and provision and to deliberate price relativity manipulation beyond large ranch cattle, karakul, mutton and wool and - perhaps - small grower sheep and goats plus large grower milk, sectoral policy and land holding structured to promote surpluses for large ranchers and food supplements to contract workers not stable, acceptable worker/small farmer livelihoods. The manifestations and the potentially serviceable tools for dealing with them vary much more than the underlying problems.

The Northern 'Communal' Mixed Farming Areas suffer from inadequate access to land (exacerbated by the FNDC and large rancher penetrations since 1970), inadequate access to markets (and therefore cash incomes); lack of relevant knowledge, inputs and tools, working capital; limited transport and basic service infrastructure; gender discrimination in access to land and ploughing; land and vegetation (from trees through grass) degradation from overuse; loss of adult males and whole households on a scale which threatens to replace over-population with depopulation in certain



districts; and - like all of Namibia - a very variable and basically hostile weather/water context.

The basic approach likely to be effective is rural development for whose knowledge and resource injection elements the new agricultural centre/outstation approach would appear to be a relevant start. Here the problem is not primarily past land theft in the north but land theft elsewhere plus denial of markets, knowledge, infrastructure and finance to prevent the emergence of a prosperous small farming community and to ensure a flow of cheap contract labour. The policy goal underlying these results is gone, but reversing its legacy will take years, careful finding out of facts (including what rural households themselves want, need, believe they can do) and expenditure of substantial numbers of high and middle level personnel (still to be trained) and of financial resources.

The so-called "subsistence mentality" is an historic artefact. In the absence of market access, northern households were limited to producing for their own use. Subsistence indeed, is misleading - few households were or could have been self-sufficient in food; the point of the system was to force them to provide a flow of cheap "contract" workers and to keep the cost of those workers down by allowing their womenfolk to scratch out a few crops and their brothers to raise a few stock. The real historic record shows more instances of market opportunities - for grain, cattle, milk - used by black Namibians and hastily sealed off by the colonial regime than of failure to respond to accessible market incentives. That was again demonstrated in 1989/90 - the problem was not to induce enough farmers to seek to achieve a marketable mahogo surplus but to ensure that the actual surplus was bought.

Doubtless the northern agricultural system is the product of "tribal prejudice", but not as normally meant. The tribes in question are the German and the Afrikaner. And the prejudices are primarily against letting African agriculture compete for markets or for employees (including self-employees). But "subsistence mentality" and "tribal prejudice" are ultimately political and subjective not technical and objective terms. For historic reasons that debate has come late to Namibia - it was fought in the mid-1960s and early 1970s in West and perhaps three-quarters of a decade later in East Africa. But the record there suggests that beyond the obvious obstacle to sustainable political reconciliation the terms have

another damaging potential. They remain in the memory of technocrats and shape both the policies they propose and their explanations of the failure of policies they design without adequate attention to small farmer needs and capacities, contextual constraints or actual market conditions. Just as "false consciousness" is a self validating excuse for having misread what people wanted, so "subsistence mentality" avoids the need to inquire what the real policy and programme failures have been.

Land access in this zone is basically to land use, not ownership, rights. Secure, hereditary land use rights are - on the record elsewhere in Africa - no barrier to rural development. There are reasons to suspect abuses and incongruities in the present northern Namibian system(s). These are clearest in respect to gender and to political persuasion. But until the nature, evolution and underlying principles of the systems are studied, no real base for systemic reform (e.g. codification and administration by councils responsible to democratically elected local government units) exists. Substitution of freehold tenure would hardly appear administratively practicable, politically prudent nor production efficient now (if ever).

The Northwest 'Communal' Ranching Zone has already been cited as an example of gross inequality of cattle holdings and grazing rights with related gender discrimination. This interacts with a contract labour/divided household pattern less dominant than in the northern mixed farming zone but still significant.

Here land (use right access) reform is central to the land question. Rural development, by itself, can raise output but primarily (as in Botswana) for the top tenth of households and very little for the bottom half. The issue is what reform is socially acceptable, politically feasible and technically plausible. Gender and employee (particularly San employee) issues are integral to any answer purporting to address equity and social relations holistically.

The Central and Southern 'Communal' Areas are largely badlands with a combination of overcrowding (relative to land capacity), drought and total lack of development leaving only vestigial livestock (largely smallstock) and spot cropping. While in the past gross inequality in access to pasture has been cited, the drought seems to have achieved inequality the wrong way in some cases - by wiping out the livelihoods of the well off

while making the poor paupers. Arguably the Kaokoveld and its southern extension are similar albeit somewhat more of a herding economy survives.

Here access to land alone will be of little help. Rural development is needed and what and how are far from clear.

Rehoboth probably has the worst inequality in land access, the worst social relations and the most underpaid labour force (excluding the northeastern San) in Namibia. It is unclear whether productivity is high enough to allow adequate remuneration of workers (and if not why not). Land reform by splitting ranches which often are already hampered by diseconomies of scale would help with access but not with livelihoods unless a very different neo-traditional/neo-Botswana reserve pasture system could be instituted. Politically the situation is potentially explosive - Rehoboth landlords appear, by and large, to have more entrenched non-reconciliatory attitudes than any other group and most of their impoverished, exploited workers are not Rehobothers. Charade as it is, the attempted secession suggests very hard going for land reform and rural development in that zone.

The San Areas are again different. Nominally they are for hunting and gathering - the historic San use of land. In reality they are quite inadequate for that purpose and the historic San economy and societies have been shattered by colonial rule and by war. Some reconstructions of livelihoods basically turning on livestock and limited crop production (with an uncertain but normally low hunting/gathering contribution have been attempted with very uneven results.

The land problem can be posed in terms which make it insoluble (access to enough - and appropriate enough - land to restore hunting/gathering economies and societies). Or it can be posed in terms of land access and tenure adequate to construct viable transformed herding-cropping-hunting/gathering household and community economies. The latter approach potentially leads to solutions but is hampered by very limited agro technical, agro economic and San household economy knowledge and - perhaps even more - by a stifling pattern of condescending paternalism on the part of many (not all) of the foundations and agencies used by the state as intermediaries in its relations with and acting as self-designated patriarchal guardians for the San.

The Large Ranch Zones (and the associated mixed farming sub-zones around Tsumeb, the Otavi Highlands and the artesian areas) are the locus classicus of the land question. They represent the half of agriculturally usable land seized and held primarily by European iron shedding African blood. For them (and - at least initially - only secondarily for mines) "contract" was erected. The problem of access remains but is complex. Perhaps 5% of such farms are Black owned. With development oriented and subsidised credit (plus limitations on transfer) that could be built up to - say - 50% in 2000. But this would do nothing for poor would-be farmers' access and nor would it, by itself, raise ranch employee incomes.

The large ranches have four subsets: suitable for mixed farming (an expansible proportion but a limited one), suitable for cattle, suitable for cattle and small stock, suitable for small stock. These are ecological characteristics and their implications for the relevance of actual large ranch land to would-be mixed farmers and large stock raisers needs more systematic examination than it has received to date.

Assuming - reasonably - that foreign citizen/resident owned ranches, abandoned and/or foreclosed ranches and some other acquisitions will provide at least some land to reallocate, a question arises as to who is to have priority in access. The present government's policy appears to be "land to the tiller" which implies present ranch employees (and presumably worker owned co-ops or companies). The case made by some regional groups is land back to those who used it "before the Germans came". (That is not a very precise definition as exactly when before colonisation would have major implications as to who was to receive access.) A third case is for landless or near landless households with farming experience from overcrowded areas (especially the Oshana country). These three principles of priority all have arguable cases - the present point is that they would lead to very different groups of access recipients and the second/third would tend to take away the livelihoods of present ranch workers.

A partially separate issue is tenure reform. Freehold tenure is not universal even in market economies in respect to all land resources, e.g. it usually (including in Namibia) does not apply to mining. A respectable economic case can be made for treating land as a national asset which cannot be alienated but use rights over which can be and are sold for varying periods (perfectly plausibly up to 99 years) in return for

allocation premia and annual rentals. In that event provisions on what first refusal rights if any a use right holder has at the end of his lease and how unexhausted improvements are valued and paid for if the user changes are needed, as are regulations on transferability and hereditability of use rights (including of course regulations providing for sale and inheritance like any other asset if that is deemed socially and economically prudent). This issue is partially separate because conversion of all present freeholds (for the immediate case agricultural, but the same principles apply to urban and industrial land) to 99 year leaseholds (from 21 March 1990) at no initial premia and initial rents of R1 per hectare rising by the inflation rate through the 99 years would alter the ownership of land and future access to it - but would not, by itself, change present user patterns. Nor, of course, would it prevent or impede (indeed it might facilitate) parallel user alteration measures.

Worker remuneration and social relations on large ranches are not uniform. R250 to R400 a month, meat, 3 room cottages, garden plots, assistance with local schools and facilitation of craft income opportunities for spouses are not typical but they do exist. Similarly, R20 cash, rotten meat, shanties and no access to education or health services are by no means a thing of the past even if they are no longer typical. On average Namibia's ranches appear to pay and to house workers better than the comparable sectors in Botswana, Zimbabwe or Zambia. And - possibly more to the point - in a majority of cases there appears to have been cumulative, sustained progress over the past three to five years (and in a minority for rather longer).

#### IV.

##### Toward Strategies to Answer The Land Question

Because the land question is complex and multidimensional, any realistic strategy directed toward providing satisfactory ways forward will also need to have several related but separate components. There are no simple, single instrument, general answers on offer - except wrong ones. Ten clusters of policies, programmes and action instruments appear to be potentially relevant:

Land Tenure/Sovereignty; Land Use/Abuse; Land Transfer/Settlement Patterns; Small (and large) Farm Techniques; Irrigation; Employee Livelihoods/Social

Relations; Gender; Secondary Cash Incomes; Water - Education - Health; Production Mix/Subsidies.

Land Tenure/Sovereignty. The issue of Namibian sovereignty over land can be resolved in the same way as that over mineral (and fish) resources by vesting title in the state on behalf of the Namibian people (present and future) and issuing land use rights.

For the large ranch/farms sector (the present rural freehold sector), and logically the urban freehold sector as well, these could be by 99 years from 21 March 1990. Provision could be made for premia on allocation (waived or set at R1 per land use title on conversions from freehold), annual rents (R1 per hectare rising with inflation - or if prudent for tactical reasons waived for 9 years), right of first refusal and reallocation/extension with the new use right holder to pay market value for unexpired improvements (e.g. buildings); transferable by right holder and hereditary.

This approach would vest land ownership in the state but also provide for secure user rights (and a state revenue source analogous to mineral rights). It has been used in certain other African states and, interestingly, was floated by the SWA Agricultural Union in September 1989. It would have both symbolic and practical political positive results, but with 99 year tenure should not alarm large farmers.

The practical problem is not likely to be constitutionality as such (if it is the analogous mineral and fish ownership/use allocation legislation is also unconstitutional!). But the question is whether compensation would be due is a real one. Two approaches are possible.

The first is to argue that the present value of any asset 99 years from now is negligible. Thus a 99 year use right (leasehold) is only marginally less valuable than a freehold. In that case a sum of - say - R9 per hectare used to offset the first nine years rent might be deemed adequate compensation by the courts.

The second is to introduce a tax on freehold land. That is clearly permissible under the constitution. The tax could be - say - R5 per hectare for agricultural land and - say - 20 per cent of estimated rental value for urban. However, if a freeholder chose to convert to 99 year leasehold he would no longer be liable to the freehold tax.

It has been stated that it is government policy to limit landholding (or at any rate rural landholding) to citizens. Nominally of course a user right system does end non-citizen land-ownership but that may seem a slightly disingenuous argument. It is possible to require that user rights be held by citizens or permanent residents (urban rules might be different or could be sub-leases from user right holders). Apparently the number of rural units at issue today is about 400. If this approach is enacted a time period for free sale to an eligible person should be provided (e.g. three years from departure or inheritance from a citizen/resident by a non-resident/non citizen) after which the state could revoke the right on payment for unexpired improvements plus the prorated unexpired portion of the allocation premium. Any rational inheritor or departer would sell within three years. A "grandfather clause" might be prudent giving any existing freeholder at the effective date of the Act the right to convert to a 99 year user right and five years from the issuance of the user right to sell freely. This has a certain equity - these persons could not foresee the change in ownership/use rules - and it would probably help avoid misunderstandings with the German public and private sectors.

A definitional problem arises for companies. It is possible to have a state company which - when a foreign owned company or a joint venture, is seen as an appropriate holder of rural or urban user rights - receives the 99 year right and leases it to the foreign owned/joint venture company. Other solutions are possible but some rules are needed to prevent 100% foreign owned, Namibian registered companies being used to avoid the purpose of the legislation.

Communal land tenure is in fact communal (the pre-colonial analogue to national) ownership with household user right allocations. It can, therefore, be integrated into any Act in general outline and as to principle. But before details are enacted a detailed study of present practices, appropriate modifications and possible elected local government roles would appear highly desirable. African attempts to codify 'traditional' (more accurately evolved historic) tenure have rarely been successful, precisely because they did not bother to learn what the existing system was, how it was evolving and what were its strengths and limits as perceived by farmers.

One key issue is determining how land 'vacant' because of rotation/resting is treated. If it is treated as truly vacant and reallocated, very serious inequity results for present user right holders who, in the past, would have rotated on to it. The Guinea (Bissau) Land Tenure Reform has had catastrophic effects on small farmers precisely for that reason. This problem may (or may not) be less acute in much of Namibia because rotation - and especially long rotation (derogatorily, and often inaccurately, called "slash and burn" or "shifting cultivation" when - and only when - practiced by Africans, Asians or Latin American smallholders) is less relevant to grazing than to cropping.

Another key issue - and one needing early action - is providing equality of access to women. This is most urgent in the case of female headed or de facto female headed (male absent most of the year) households, but generally the principle is that a woman should be as eligible to have a land use title in her own name as a man, even if she and her husband live together. That principle would appear to be required by the Constitution.

A third key issue can be entitled "retirement plots". The concept of keeping access to land during a working life off the land in order to retire to it is very common in Africa. Under "contract" this usually meant keeping the user right/allocation in the man's name and his wife on the land. As more households live together off the land the issue will become more complex. In Tanzania the increasingly general solution is to "lease" (often at no or nominal charge) the right to a relative who keeps up the land, the livestock and trees (if any) and the house and in return enjoys their use until the user right/herd/improvement owner retires. So long as the land is properly used/maintained there is no very evident objection to this approach.

Land Use/Abuse relates to underutilisation and destructive malutilisation (land mining). For administrative reasons early legislation on the former should probably have a cut-off point of over 5 hectares of croppable and 50 hectares of grazing land (de facto excluding the communal sector except to a handful of grazing rights). While abuse prevention/improvement incentive legislation may need to be different for the small and large sectors, it needs to apply to both - the Oshana country and the Okavango Valley, for example, are just as much at risk as the large ranchlands.



If deliberate underutilisation of land is a problem (as it is in Zimbabwe) a possible way forward is a tax on "rated output" (i.e. the output which would be attained by a well run farm/ranch). If this is set at - say - 5% of gross output but is offsetable against income tax then it should not add to total taxation for an efficient, fully used ranch but would be a heavy inducement to sell hoarded extra hectareage and inefficiently run whole ranches. Legislation of this kind has been considered in Zimbabwe since 1984 and is now likely to proceed.

Such a tax is not unconstitutional. To induce full use of land is a proper public purpose; a rancher can "avoid" the tax by selling. In fact it is on the economic (even if not on the land access) side a very conservative tax because the higher the output the lower the net tax on this head.

Two problems arise: efficient rated output would need to be estimated unit by unit on a land grading system and drought year reduction formulae would be needed as well as means to apply them (given the remarkably uneven rainfall even on contiguous ranches).

Good use (ecology) rules would need to be based on expert technical studies, a knowledge of what is socially and technically possible and use of incentives (e.g. payments for tree and bush planting, initial practice of holistic farming, prudent water management) in preference to penalties wherever feasible, especially in respect of small farming households. Again the variability of rainfall annually and within small areas will pose a problem in respect to carrying capacity limits though probably not an insoluble one.

The ultimate penalty for land mining should be use right forfeiture. Fines - for venial and initial violations - have a role, but sustained abuse threatens the national heritage and the future of the land and amply justifies forfeiture (analogous in this case to fish catch licenses).

Land Transfer/Settlement Patterns issues require pragmatic, contextual and "trial run" handling. Abandoned, ex-foreign, sold by retirers or heirs and other vacancies are likely to put - say - 1,000/1,250 large units on the market over the next 5 years. That is roughly 20% to 25% of all operating units.

Here a conundrum arises. There are no tested, successful ways of running a large ranch in Namibia except as a "family farm" - state and genuinely corporate farms have a dismal record and, in any case, do not increase household access to land nor - without other steps which are rarely taken - enhance social relations of production. On the other hand if 1,000/1,250 citizen buyers came forward, then the large scale private domination of large ranches and of central and southern Namibian agriculture by large ranches would be locked in place for decades - a result neither the Government nor (judging by the platform planks of the Parties for which they voted) up to three-fourths of the electorate desire.

This conundrum suggests that a set of pilot projects for new forms of ranch organisation be set up promptly. These could include: worker production co-ops are companies based on providing credit and technical advice to the present employees; resettlement co-ops/Companies with farmers previously not on ranches and/or employees moving from other ranches; where technically/economically plausible 'breakup' into a series of arable family holdings and a jointly managed pastoral area. Because each will - at least initially - prove very intensive in respect to scarce knowledge and personal, in the interim the State might consider acquiring more ranches than it can put into such schemes and leasing them to experienced existing ranchers on 3 to 7 year contracts.

As noted, certain access problems (to grazing rights) analogous to the large ranch area exist in Rehoboth and the northeastern areas with Herero customary allocation. The latter, at least, require a different entry point than land or land use right purchase. Presumably this would include revised guide-lines on grazing allocations including ceilings on beasts allowed to any one household or cluster of households.

Settlement patterns do pose real issues but hardly in the new settlement/rural development dichotomy sometimes posed. Rural development includes new settlements and return of those not now on the land to presently unused home areas. New settlements are a means, not an end in themselves. They are - on African experience - unlikely to be generally popular. Only in the cases of newly opened up areas (e.g. borehole use to open up certain areas to the southwest and southeast of Etosha Pan; new artesian or irrigated mixed farming zones; mixed farming, small holder zones on the Karstveldt) would they appear to be likely to be central and

in these cases the Settlement Authority's proper role is to support farming household village development desires not to engage in romantic (whether romantic Marxist or romantic neo-liberal) social engineering. However, improved provision of water, health, education, electricity, commercial units will - if these are clustered - create incentives in response to which a gradual shift from individual family homesteads to villages is likely and some unit should stand prepared to advise on and to provide part finance for village development.

Small (and Large) Farm Techniques are a problem, not primarily because most in either group demonstrably use techniques radically inferior to the best known, tested utilised ones, but because (especially for small farmers) known techniques are not productive enough to generate decent, safe, expandable livelihoods.

To make long term breakthroughs will require rapid development and action to carry out of a ten to twenty year research (including field and farmer testing) strategy. A first step is to find out - from SACAR (of SADCC), Zimbabwe, Botswana and Tanzania in particular and perhaps also the Southern African Development Bank - what is known and to begin selective adaptation and field testing of what looks adequate. There is a need to secure technical agricultural (including Namibian), social science (dominantly Namibian) and political (Namibian) coordinated inputs both in strategy formulation and execution because technical, social and political possibilities, priorities and constraints are all valid and few, if any, persons are experts in all three.

A check list of areas in which knowledge can probably be secured and applied rapidly (i.e. 1 to 5 years) includes:

- a. holistic ranching (i.e. short term, concentrated grazing with planned rotation which can break up caked soil, lead to pasture improvement, reduce erosion, sustain or raise carrying capacity) - using fences, herdpersons and or dogs as may be most practicable (presumably the first on large scale ranches and the second pair in communal areas);
- b. animal drawn implements (preferably used to develop light industry and artisanal establishments in cropped areas) and conceivably light tractors;

- c. improved seeds (which appear to be available in the region subject to testing/adaptation);
- d. finding the best known techniques - especially among small scale farmers - and extending them;
- e. agro-forestry (i.e. homestead, village communal tree and bush planting/use for windbreaks, fuel, building materials, fodder, food and saleable produce as an integral part of mixed farmer) which has historic precedents in at least part of the north.

Irrigation is not a total answer to the "land access by land creation" approach. There is not enough water and it is too far from many areas of potential use quite apart from inherent technical (e.g. salination, evaporation) problems in its application in hot, near desert, light soil ecological areas. Nor is irrigation a single topic. Several different types have at least some applicability:

- a. Kunene based canal investigation to augment Oshana flows (especially in low rainfall and/or flood years) and to open up (limited) new cropping areas;
- b. artesian irrigation for specific local zones if the recharge levels are known, the water table stable and offtake limited to levels consistent with recharge rates (at present not including the Karstveldt whose water table is falling alarmingly and where recharge rate is almost certainly not yet adequately modelled/estimated);
- c. spot irrigation (for gardens or larger plots on single large ranches or small clusters of communal holdings) from borehole or check dam (normal or sand filled reservoir) water surplus to human and livestock needs;
- d. pump irrigation from the Okavango (probably limited by valley configuration) and the Orange (previously limited primarily by Occupation Regime policy, albeit as a result, adequate soil suitability and crop selection data is yet to be developed);
- e. evaluation and - if practicable - continuation/stabilisation of the Hardap Scheme with consideration of whether any analogues are technically practicable and economically prudent (probably not);

- f. use of Mid-Caprivi swamp water and/or Zambese pumped water for irrigation in the Caprivi Strip - subject to testing economic viability which is constrained by the region's isolation from large Namibian or plausible export markets.

Employee Livelihoods/Social Relations are a central part of any acceptable answer to the land question. 40,000 to 60,000 employees and 200,000 to 300,000 persons are involved. If large scale ranching were to collapse, they would no longer be vulnerable to such a collapse but absolutely poor and headed for Katatura's margins and the exurbs of smaller towns and country dorps. But their present situation - with exceptions - is not acceptable either.

Minimum wages (e.g. R250 a month), required rations or additions to wages, family cottages of decent standard, right to keep fowl and small stock for own use and - where feasible - to garden, effective access (by employer transport if necessary) to education and health facilities, right of spouses to engage in non-farm cash generating activities (e.g. artisanry) are crucial and urgent. The how is likely to have several components:

- a. compulsory access of the Agricultural Workers Union to all ranches to organise and to receive complaints;
- b. a wages, conditions, grievances Council to adjudicate on complaints and to set minimum standards because collective bargaining with small employers is difficult;
- c. convincing the majority of ranchers who do - for a combination of reasons - provide or come close to providing the targeted minimum that their (as well as farm employees) worst enemies are R20 a month - rotten meat-shack housing-no access to health/school-bullying ranchers because they create virulent (and justified) animosity which tends to spread (often unfairly) to other ranchers. If most ranchers back minimum standards and have only moderate disagreements on level and recognise bad employers as the mortal enemies of good, they will exert some social pressure on them and report them to the Council - out of self protection if for no other reason.

Gender is a significant aspect of the land question especially in communal areas and most especially in respect to large stock. The same problem

applies to access to complementary resources including timely animal power for ploughing, extension advice, credit. The governing principle should (indeed, to be in accord with the Constitution, must) be genuinely equal access. Access via a male relative (or husband) is not good enough. Tenure law reform alone will not be adequate, but it can provide a foundation for women's self-organisation, education and local government action.

This argument is not simply egalitarian or redistributionist. Female headed households are of the order of 20% in northern communal areas. Even from a narrow production efficiency perspective, it is inefficient that they should have restricted and insecure access to land and complementary resources. In this case the neo-liberal political economic stance should, by its own logic, be feminist at least so far as removing special gender related barriers to access goes.

In principle the equal access principle should apply to ranch employment. In practice there is gender typing by occupation - domestic (including for guests on 'tourist' ranches) and (occasionally) clerical posts are held by women but those relating to animals virtually never are. This cannot in practice be legislated away, especially so long as women (by Namibian custom) have no experience working with animals and therefore are objectively less qualified employment candidates than men.

Secondary cash incomes are crucial to total rural household incomes above the absolute poverty line and/or capable of expansion to meet modest sufficiency tests in many countries in Africa (where 25% non-agricultural cash and kind and 50% cash is not uncommon in many areas) and more generally (e.g. in Continental Western Europe). In Namibia the less than optimal ecological conditions and the lack of past experience in commercialisation are an added reason for seeking to develop such incomes. No rational household will find access to land very valuable if taking it up means access to penury in good weather years and pauperisation in bad.

Craft production (from jigsaw puzzles for urban Windhoek and tourists through clothing to processed foods for local sale) is one avenue - and one which could be particularly valuable in raising women's cash incomes. The first need is data, the second help in teaching and (probably) in marketing-input supply-credit. Both will take time to build up to large volumes and while there are numerous analogous micro successes in some

other Southern African countries it is not clear how data on them can be retrieved.

A more immediate possibility is public works. Rural infrastructure - both as to construction and as to maintenance - can in large part, be handled on an agricultural off-season, labour intensive, capital non-intensive (largely hand tools) basis with little if any added financial cost, far lower imports and substantial augmentation of rural cash incomes. While not optimal in project choice, the Botswana drought period supplementary employment scheme can provide a foundation to adapt to/test under Namibian conditions. Its new phase - somewhat smaller, more careful identification of priority infrastructure to build/maintain - in the 1990/95 5 Year Plan should also be worth following. An interesting feature is the requirement that 35% odd of all employees be women. Before the requirement it did not happen despite government encouragement; with it there was no problem finding suitable female employees (simple construction and maintenance is learned by doing and in much of Asia is largely done by women) and little social or local political opposition.

As noted cash incomes outside agriculture are especially needed while production and market channels for commercialisation are built up. The labour intensive works profile can fit this need - roads, bridges, culverts, schools, clinics, ditches, wells, etc., are needed urgently as is deferred maintenance on existing ones. If a large programme can be built up from 1991/92, then in five years the peak may be passed at the same time cash income from agriculture and artisanry can be expected to be rising faster. Thereafter peak public works programmes should be kept on standby (a project bank approach) for activation in drought years to provide - rural households with partial replacement income to be able to ride out the bad years while remaining on the land. To do this requires continued use of the approach on routine maintenance and construction so that an institutional structure to expand exists as well as identified projects.

Water - Education - Health at first glance are only loosely related to the land question. On closer examination there is interaction with land reform and rural development. Water for human and animal consumption is a basic production, as well as health and amenity, input. Collecting water is one of the heaviest - and most readily reducible - portions of most rural Namibian women's workload. Health services, including preventative and

community, are also an input into production as well as a basic human good. Once again they are crucial to reducing women's workload (which includes tending sick persons and getting them to medical facilities) and/or allowing more time to be devoted to production. Education (including continuing) adult education and extension) is an input into present as well as to future production.

Therefore, if production - and as a result meaningful livelihood pay-off from access to land - is to be raised health, education, water are central inputs not welfare amenities. Further, unless they are available in rural areas (whether large ranch or small household unit) there will be a growing reluctance to stay on the land at all.

Production Mix/Subsidies: Namibia's present production mix does relate in part to historic land holding patterns and to overall economic policies (especially relative price and market access policies) of the occupation regime. In part too it relates to high subsidies to agriculture and, more particularly, to their near total allocation to the large ranching sector.

The first step toward redressing these biases is to provide market access at reasonable prices for crops (and to a lesser extent dairy and poultry products) including those produced by smallholders and to extend the area of effective veterinary cover to include the whole country wiping out the Red Line barrier to marketing. A related measure may need to be changing the uses of potential arable/ranching units if - as may be the case - smallholders or a production co-op would find more cropping and less priority to livestock economically attractive, whereas a large scale sole proprietor would not.

Subsidies are a complex question. In principle there are two cases for them: an early year developmental one (e.g. to encourage breakthroughs into commercialisation, to cover initial costs of new techniques) and an efficient livelihood support (i.e. subsidies which allow greater earned incomes by poor households with few or no other options) one, for subsidies. The time issues here are total cost; trade-offs with rural infrastructure, extension, basic human services (which are not normally seen as subsidies albeit arguably they are); efficiency at generating output gains; potential for phasing out.



However another issue exists. Historical subsidies (including investment grants, low interest rates, residence grants) accounted for a significant share of the total net income of many large ranches. Phasing these subsidies out is desirable both in production and distribution and in political and social terms. But a question of phasing arises. Net incomes were not particularly large to begin with for most ranches. Paying employees more is a priority. Therefore further cost increases to large ranches (e.g. full cost veterinary fees and/or water and electricity charges) should probably be delayed until a systematic study of the sector's cost structure and net incomes post interest and residence subsidy abolition has been carried out and be phased rather than near instantaneous (as recent past charge changes have been).

Similarly, a portion of the gain on EEC quota beef sales should go to the providers of the cattle - perhaps half - even though "above the Red Line" growers cannot now benefit except by improved purchases and prices at the tinning plant. A 50-50 division growers (via general meat price paid by SWAfleis) and to veterinary services (focused on universal disease control to open up new areas to access to the export market) might be prudent. Over time - as the Red Line retreated or faded - the small, previously discriminated against livestock growers would benefit from the grower 50% and from the start they would be the dominant gainers from geographic extension of veterinary coverage.

## V.

### Valediction

The land question is real and central, not rhetorical and marginal in Namibia. Its handling is crucial to reconciliation, employment and livelihoods and reduction of absolute poverty as well as of not insignificant importance to exports, import substitution and industrial (processing) development.

The problems posed are political, production economic, distributional economic, ecological, and institutional. Each is complex by itself and interacts with others. What is necessary and practicable is neither

limited to the large (ex-European) ranch sector nor uniform nationally. The cost of mistakes can be very high.

Contrary to what might seem to be common sense, the above do not constitute a case for doing nothing or mounting a purely cosmetic and rhetorical strategy. That would be a costly mistake, potentially as costly as measures throwing or panicking 90% of the large scale ranches off the land in a year or two. Prudence in this case means promptness and seriousness means substance.

The basic goals of reaffirmation of sovereignty, fair access to land, decent incomes for small farmers and large unit employees and (necessarily for the foregoing to be attainable/sustainable) rising production and productivity are identifiable, reasonably simple to understand and yardsticks against which to measure strategy components and initial experience. Ecologists, agronomists, social scientists, politicians, ranchers and - perhaps especially - ranch employees and small agricultural households (male and female headed) all have contributions of knowledge, experience and needs to make. These need to be coordinated to result in prompt and prudent, viable and equitable action. The lead in coordination must, in practice, be taken by politicians but the other groups need to make clear they have, and are willing to pool, contributions to dialogue and programming and to do so in terminology and on terms political leaders (including the agricultural workers union leadership) can accept.

Source Note

This study is based as much on discussions over 15 years with a wide range of Namibians and with experience in Sub-Saharan Africa (particularly but not only independent Southern Africa - the SADCC States) over 30 years as on a normal documentary survey, reading and analysis process. The bibliographies to the Macro-Economic, Agricultural, Forestry, Water and Ecology Chapters of Namibia - Towards National Reconstruction and Development indicate most of the documentary and analytical materials consulted - in some cases augmented by 1988-90 CCN and UNICEF studies. No claim is made to having conducted a systematic survey nor independent field level research.

Author Note

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