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# **GUIDELINES FOR A NAMIBIAN LAND POLICY**

submitted by

**AGRECONA**

The Association of Agricultural Economists of Namibia

to the

**NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LAND REFORM AND THE LAND QUESTION**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

AGRECONA believes that -

- (a) the broader perspective of a comprehensive national land policy is urgently needed;
- (b) any redistribution of land rights must be taken within, and consistent with, policies regarding land husbandry and use.

Discussions on a land dispensation must be ecologically sound, economically sound, socially sound, and they must help in achieving the goals of a land policy.

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## **GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

Namibia's land, its productivity and ecological health can be maintained, improved and exploited simultaneously if managed correctly. Since the general state of the economy and welfare of all Namibians depends very much on this, the correct utilization or management of the land must be the overriding concern in a land policy.

However, land contributes to society in a wide variety of ways and we recognize the importance of traditional customs and practices as an inevitable key in a development policy.

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## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR LAND POLICY**

3.1 Consistent with the general principles the following overall goal is recommended for Namibia's land policy:

**To achieve the optimal allocation and utilization of Namibia's land resources for the maximum benefit of all Namibians, present and future.**

3.2 In pursuit of this goal, the following objectives can be identified:

- (a) **Protect, conserve and enhance the productivity of land and the natural resource environment.**
- (b) **Increase the contributions of land and related resources to the economy and economic development of Namibia.**

- (c) Stabilize the agricultural sector and through it contribute stability to the national economy.
- (d) Increase the flows of non-monetary (social) benefits to be derived from access to land.
- (e) Contribute to overall social and political development and stability of the nation.

#### 4. **OVERALL COMPONENTS OF A LAND POLICY**

##### 4.1 **CONCEPTS OF DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE**

The constitutional provision of "equitable access to land" is interpreted as equal opportunity to land rights. The principle of "affirmative action" is recognized as valid. It is important, however, for both domestic and foreign confidence that affirmative action initiatives have a definite end point in time.

##### 4.2 **THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF A MARKET ORIENTATION**

The strongest recommendation of this report is that a market orientation prevail throughout land policies and their implementation and that a commercial orientation be sustained as the economic basis for the agricultural sector. By market orientation, we mean, *inter alia*, that a viable market in land rights be preserved, that land redistributions be implemented through market mechanisms, that incentives to guide

land into its most productive uses be transmitted to farmers using price signals and institutional development and that the markets for inputs and outputs remain in the private sector when possible.

#### 4.3 FURTHER THOUGHTS ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

It is recommended that affirmative action strategies be focused largely on redistributing the flow of public sector institutional services to agriculture so that the small farmers, especially those attempting to commercialize their operations, become the primary clientele of affirmative action in agriculture.

#### 5.0 SPECIFIC ISSUES IN THE NAMIBIAN LAND DEBATE

- 5.1 **AGRECONA** supports the use of land or property taxation as a part of an overall integrated tax system, including income- and sales tax.
- 5.2 Dual land rights should be permitted under the concepts of a free market approach and encouraging private initiatives within land and the agricultural sector.
- 5.3 Virgin land should be developed and brought to serve national interests together with the extension of support services into such areas.
- 5.4 **AGRECONA** feels that the nationality of land owners is not relevant, but that all farms are to be subject to taxation and other policies designed to ensure that land is productively used.

- 5.5 AGRECONA calls for a full review and evaluation of Government programmes for disaster and drought relief and all subsidization measures as they are easily misused and result in keeping unproductive people in farming.
- 5.6 As at the Swakopmund Conference of the International Association of Agricultural Economists in July of last year, a managed programme of food security, including increased trade in agricultural and food products, rather than a policy of food self-sufficiency must be recommended.
- 5.7 In the field of agricultural marketing policy, the appropriate role for Government is to set the rules and some facilities, but to leave actual marketing processes to private enterprise.
- 5.8 It is suggested that Government consider developing incentives to make it easier to employ labour in agriculture.
- 5.9 Finally, AGRECONA feels that the Subdivision of Agricultural Land Act, 1970 (Act No 70 of 1970), must probably be scrapped.