

**Land Reform and Redistribution;
FISA proposals for the National Land Reform Conference,
25th June - 1st July 1991, Windhoek, Namibia.**

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[Intro: Who/what is FISA?

Fisa is a subsidiary of NCCA - (Namibian Community Co-operatives' Alliance). It aims to co-ordinate the activities of eight (8) communal land livestock farmers' co-operative-savings and credit associations. Fisa's practical programmes involve: revolving loan fund as a back up to member-leagues', cooperative livestock marketing and lobbying for change... for and with the farmers. See press-cuttings herewith attached as appendix A... for more details on Fisa]

This document is a summary of members' discussions on the land question during two FISA seminars, held from 19 - 21 March 1991 and from 7 - 8 June 1991. We have made this account as short as possible to facilitate reading and discussion.

A. The problem

A.1 Communal areas

- a) Too much stock, too many people and too little land; we are crowding one another out... while many commercial farmers own two or more farms of at least 6000-8000 hectares each and other land is being held by foreign absentee landlords.
- b) Farmers with drive, the so-called large farmers with 600 and more head of stock, farm on a large scale without considering the effects on the condition of our communal grazing.
- c) Agricultural extension officers are nowhere to be seen. Agricultural officials stay in their offices doing clerical work and as a result have very little influence on farmers' farming methods.
- d) Holiday or "weekend farmers" - people with other professions, such as teachers - go into farming while they have other sources of income, thus increasing the pressure on the land; in addition they often do not accept the authority of the headmen.
- e) We the farmers remain unorganised; we are too individualistic and too concern about party political divisions; we are not able to follow the example of our friends in the commercial farming areas who have set up farmers' associations; we remain weak and voiceless.
- f) We are shocked to learn that large farmers from communal areas who obtained loans and bought commercial farms under the previous administration still receive our leaders' permission to graze their herds in the communal areas. This increases the pressure on communal grazing still more.
- g) Traditional leaders, together with the respective regional

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agricultural offices, are supposed to grant grazing rights to families - and to see to the maintenance of infrastructure and social services in communal areas. This is not happening. Grazing rights are granted without taking into account the carrying capacity of the land. The leaders are powerless to exert control, and everyone does what he or she wishes. Without wanting to generalise, there are also signs of favouritism and nepotism at work, in the granting of grazing rights.

A.2 Rehoboth area:

a) We the underprivileged small farmers have for years paid rent to remain on the private farms of the privileged who have ethnic private property rights in the area. We are daily subject to eviction because of allegations that we have not paid monthly rent to landlords.

b) A small area of 4000-6000 hectares just 5km south of Rehoboth was proclaimed a communal area for "us." Every imaginable underprivileged small farmer without land rights in Rehoboth is these days being sent to this area, where people and stock are severely crowded.

c) All this goes on while the privileged owners of private farms are permitted, on grounds of alleged drought on their own farms, to graze the state farms in the Rehoboth area.

A.3 The consequences:

- * Overgrazing; our communal areas are turning into deserts.
- * There is endless family conflict between people competing for limited water and grazing in the same area.
- * Even farmers with drive and initiative find it hard to improve their circumstances.

B. Suggestions:

1. Large farmers (people with 600 and more small stock)

1.1 Create a loan scheme whereby this category of people can be supported with loans at 2-3% interest to buy farms outside communal areas and become private landowners. But note: the government should not first buy a farm then seek people to take it over; it should make soft loans available for farmers to choose and buy their own farms.

1.2 Include strategies which will encourage large farmers to take part in the scheme. For example: a grace period of two years before payment must begin; In the event of drought, this grace period should be increased to four years; subsidise the windmill parts or diesel bought by farmers in the scheme; Heavily tax the farmers with 600 and more small stock who refuse either to consider moving from communal areas or reducing their stock numbers.

1.3 Place indirect pressure by means of taxation on commercial farmers with two or more farms to sell at least one, but both farmers and government must beware of unrealistic land prices that may result from increased demand.

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1.4 Intensify agricultural support services; Involve the NGOs; This will enhance co-ordination and minimise the state's costs.

2. Medium-sized farmers (with 200 and more stock)

2.1 Divide the areas which were added to the original reserve lands in terms of the Odendaal Plan - the so-called Odendaal farms - into farming units. Please note: we believe each of such units must be viable, and thus consider 6000-7000 hectares to be a farming unit in the south.

2.2 Allocate such farming units to three or four families to farm in partnership; Allow each family to buy shares and thereby to obtain "Sectional Title Deed Powers," encouraging them to improve and maintain the land as their own; Each family would farm with its own stock, but would participate jointly in maintenance and marketing.

2.3 Limit the numbers of stock which may be kept on such a unit to a level which takes into account the carrying capacity of that unit.

2.4 Intensify agricultural support services and involve the NGOs. Social organisation, land conservation, mixed farming (goats/poultry/pigs), investment for retirement from farming - these are just some of the issues which should become watchwords in this kind of farming.

3. Beginner farmers (people with fewer than 200 small stock)

3.1 That land which made up the original reserve areas in the period before the Odendaal Plan, should be used to allow beginner farmers to get a start.

3.2 Limit stock (goat, sheep and cattle) numbers that may be kept by individual farmers in these areas to 200 and less.

3.3 Intensify agricultural support services and involve the NGOs; Social organisation, land conservation, mixed farming (goat/poultry/pig), etc. Again, these are issues which should become watchwords in this sector of communal farming.

4. Pensioners and the unemployed:

4.1 Increase old-age pensions and thereby help the aged to be able to survive in villages without having to occupy agricultural land, where they are able neither to generate an income or to enjoy a decent life.

4.2 Create loan schemes for individuals with initiative to start job-generating businesses in the peri-urban areas. Tanning of leather, shoemaking, intensive pig or poultry farming - and please note: we do not view liquor stores as development!

4.3 Encourage local-level trade. Why should hostels within so-called Namaland import eggs and chickens from who knows where - while the fathers of the hostel children sit at home unoccupied?

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5. Granting and control of land, and legislation with effective mechanisms to insure implementation:

5.1 The fine ideas mentioned above can never take effect without regulations and the implementation of such regulations!

5.2 What about the role of traditional leaders? We believe that they have an important role to play. There is however a need for a broadly representative structure with more authority which includes them. Agricultural officials, women and NGOs must also be included. So far headmen do not have legislation which gives them authority to enforce their decisions. Equally, ordinary citizens do not have a mechanism for appealing those decisions.

5.3 What about a land/agricultural control council (or Development Committee) within each district? Such a council could be made up of: representatives of farmers' associations or leagues, the headman of the district, representatives of NGOs which actively operate in the area, and agricultural officials who would represent the state. Members of such a council would be elected every two or three years, thereby preventing entrenchment of cliques. Similarly, agricultural officials should be transferred to other districts from time to time.

5.4 The government, traditional leaders and/or a large and apparently reliable council cannot on their own ensure the effective implementation of laws or government regulations!

The man in the street is the best watchdog of a nation's laws, and so with agricultural and land regulations. We the farmers must inform ourselves of the regulations as they are announced, and we must bring cases of disregard of these to the attention of the district council, the government, the ombudsman and/or the courts.

6. Women farmers

6.1 The participation of women in the councils or any other structure which control the use of land is absolutely essential.

6.2 Women must enjoy equal rights and access to government schemes, inheritance and the law.

6.3 Women farmers, who often suffer from discriminatory pressures from their neighbours, must be enabled to take special courses in farming and farm management.

7. Farmworkers

7.1 In principle farmworkers in communal as well as commercial areas, should receive a living wage.

7.2 A state-controlled pension scheme for farmworkers is needed.

7.3 The morale and skills of farmworkers leaves much to be desired, and can be improved by ongoing orientation and training programmes.

7.4 Both employer and worker would benefit from clear and comprehensive contracts of employment which are discussed and drawn up at the beginning of the term of employment.

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B.2 Rehoboth

We are landless Namibians exactly like the others who live in communal areas, and we demand the same treatment as they receive.

C. General observations:

C.1 We, the members of NCCA last year (February 1990) commissioned a study which clearly spelled out many of our problems. Ms Susan Brown, Mr Bert Fret and Mr Simeon Musengimani were three experts invited in to help with the investigation. Copies of this important document are available on request.

C.2 Documents drawn up by agencies such as NEPRU on request of the Prime Minister's office have reached our office. Here we refer specifically to the paper entitled "ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO THE USE AND SETTLEMENT OF LAND", dated 7 March 1991, written by experts such as Mr Martin Adams and Mr Paul Devit of England. Many of their ideas agree with those we have outlined above. We take note of the problems which emerged following the resettlement of large farmers in Botswana, and thus put forward suggestions like B.1.2.2 and B.1.5.3 above to prevent the use of communal land by those who own private farms. Their emphasis on the importance of local farmers' associations/leagues is especially positive (see page 12, points 4.4-4.6 of the above mentioned document).

C.3 The ideas of commercial farmers are also available to us. We take note of the problems they mention, such as poor land management by communal farmers. But we appeal to people, including our own members, not to become emotional, since we all face the task of building a new Namibia! Africa has problems... Yes, our Odendaal farms have problems of overcrowding and overgrazing, but that is not because we are "Namas." Being Nama does not mean being bad farmers by nature! In fact, our farmers have skills!

Our problems on Odendaal farms are 100% due to the Apartheid policy which, on grounds of ethnicity, packed us into a small area, with lack of adequate agricultural support services and lack of effective mechanisms of land control! What or who is "the free market"? Is it a sacred cow? Why in its name must we allow a monopoly of land ownership by the few?

D In conclusion:

D.1 We are fully aware of debates about and the sensitivity of the land question, and have therefore avoided demands for nationalisation of land. There are in fact other solutions, and we ask others at the conference also to be flexible so that those others, like ourselves, may also gain access to this means of production - land.

Thank you.
June 1991.