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THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF DE-AGRARIANISATION IN SUB-SAHARA: A RE-LOOK ON RURAL LIVELIHOODS AND EMPLOYMENT

Douglas Nyathi,* Joram Ndlovu,** and Munyaradzi Dzvimbo.***

ABSTRACT

This article critically engages with the academic debate on de-agrarianisation which has gained traction in political economy perspectives of agrarian change in Sub-Saharan Africa. De-agrarianisation represents long-term processes of occupational adjustment, income-earning reorientation and the spatial relocation of rural dwellers away from strictly agricultural modes of livelihood. Given that Sub-Saharan Africa is steadily becoming less rural in character, there is a need to explore the critical factors that drive de-agrarianisation and its implications on rural socio-economic development. It emerges that the de-agrarianisation process is a historical process dating back from the colonial era. It is driven by urban and industrial development, the globalisation process, neoliberal policies, climate change variability, growth of off-farm livelihood options and access to education. This phenomenon has far-reaching widespread social, economic and ecological effects in rural areas. We challenge the taken-for-granted assumptions of the farm household efficiency paradigm that has dominated rural development thinking in the Global South and recommend the need for measures that can help boost non-farm activities availability, including increasing the access of rural households to assets such as financial capital and non-price factors like education and infrastructure. The development of non-farm activities should complement the effort to re-agrarianise since activities in the former depend directly or indirectly on the latter.

Keywords: de-agrarianisation, agriculture, households, livelihoods, diversification.

1. INTRODUCTION

Rural areas in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) are among the most under-developed regions in the world¹. It is important to note that agriculture has

traditionally been one of the main livelihood strategies of most rural Sub-Saharan societies. However, there has been a shift from concentrating on agricultural activities to other livelihood strategies in Sub-Sahara^{2 3}. This shift has been a result of a combination of arid/semi-arid climate, severe agro-ecological (soil, vegetation) conditions, low levels of infrastructural development and poor government services which have created a risky environment for agricultural development⁴. Colonialism and independence are perceived to have led to the expansion of cash economies and public sectors, while education and lifestyle changes increased cash demand in rural Africans⁵. This resulted in rural households pursuing a more diversified livelihood portfolio including off-farm activities such as regular or casual employment, petty business, and trades, and urban migration which provide more reliable sources of income than crop and livestock activities⁶.

De-agrarianisation is a global, regional and communal recurring challenge affecting many livelihoods, especially in the developing nations which bore the brunt of Western colonialism. It is a widespread phenomenon that significantly affects local and national food security, rural livelihoods and the environment. Globally, abandoned cropland increased from approximately

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¹ Kates, R. W and Dasgupta, P., 'African Poverty: A Grand Challenge for Sustainability Science' (2007), 104(43), PNA, (Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America), 16747,16750.

² Nyathi D, Beremauro R, Takavarasha T, Ndlovu J, 'Diversification and farm household welfare in grassland farm, Kwekwe District, Zimbabwe'(2018),62(1-3), Journal of Human Ecology, 58,68.

³ Nyathi, D., and Ndlovu, J. Livelihood Diversification and Household Food Security in Selected Agrarian Settings of Western Zimbabwe. (2021), Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security World Sustainability Series, 349,359.

⁴ Fischer, K. Why Africa's New Green Revolution is failing—Maize as a commodity and anti-commodity in South Africa. (2022) 130, Geoforum, 96,104.

⁵ Hunter M, Reaction to conquest: Effects of contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa, (1936), London: Oxford University Press

⁶ Hebinck P, Mtati N, and Shackleton C, More than just fields: reframing deagrarianisation in landscapes and livelihoods, (2018), 61, J. Rural Stud., 323,334, 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2018.01.004

50 million ha in the 1940s to over 200 million ha by 1990⁷. ⁸De-agrarianisation is a process of economic activity re-orientation, occupational adjustment and spatial re-alignment of human settlement away from strictly agrarian patterns. De-agrarianisation encapsulates both ‘entrepreneurial’ and ‘survival’ drives to livelihood diversification; it includes moves out of farming by those able to respond positively to economic change and the (probably more numerous) moves out of farming by those squeezed by land pressures and financial uncertainty.

Deagrarianisation is a multifaceted notion with many indicators and can be measured differently. In general, it is conceptualised as a “process producing social, material, and biophysical conditions that are not conducive to the reproduction of agrarian and land-based livelihoods”⁹. It can be understood as a diminishing amount of work in agriculture as well as a diminishing volume of land being tilled in a given area. On a more global level, deagrarianisation is a historical process of the diminishment of agriculture's role in a national economy and of limiting the importance of agriculture in rural residents' income¹⁰. Deagrarianisation manifests as reduced agricultural employment, a shrinking volume of agricultural land (through land abandonment or altering its function, e.g. through urbanisation), a diminishing number of farms, and the diminishing role of agriculture in local and national economies¹¹. The phenomenon is usually accompanied by land concentration among fewer and larger farms and by the reduction or disappearance of smallholder farming.

This article is divided into seven sections. Section one is this introduction which sets the context and agenda of the article. Section two addresses the

⁷ Cramer VA, Hobbs RJ, and Standish RJ, What's new about old fields? Land abandonment and ecosystem assembly. (2008), 23(2), *Trends Ecol Evol* 104,112. doi:10.1016/j.tree.2007.10.005. PubMed: 18191278.

⁸ Bryceson, DF., De-agrarianisation and rural employment in sub-Saharan Africa: A sectoral perspective. (1996), 24, *World Development*, 97,111.

⁹ Hebinck P, Mtaki N, and Shackleton C, More than just fields: reframing deagrarianisation in landscapes and livelihoods (2018), 61, *J. Rural Stud.*, 323,334, 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2018.01.004

¹⁰ Wojewodzic T, Sroka W, and Kopyra M “Departure from farming in polish metropolitan areas – assessment of the scale and spatial differentiation Optimum.” (2020),1 (99), *Economic Studies*, 174,186, 10.15290/oes.2020.01.99.12

¹¹ Fischer, K. Why Africa's New Green Revolution is failing—Maize as a commodity and anti-commodity in South Africa. (2022), 130, *Geoforum*, 96,104. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2021.08.001>.

concept of de-agrarianisation and traces its history. Section three discusses the statement of the problem and methodology. Section four interrogates the socio-economic; while section five addresses the implications of de-agrarianisation and sustainable rural livelihoods. Section six proffers recommendations on the measures that can help boost non-farm activity availability, including increasing access of rural households to assets such as financial capital and non-price factors such as education and infrastructure. The last section concludes the study.

2. THE CONCEPT OF DE-AGRARIANISATION: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Contemporary rural societies are experiencing processes of growing de-agrarianisation to the extent that agriculture is ceasing to be the main activity that they perform, while trends toward the broadening and diversification of their functions, each more or less significant according to the individual case, are simultaneously being observed¹². This process gives rise to what is designated as the growing multifunctionality of rural spaces. The challenge for policymakers, therefore, lies in three key policy domains. First, given the heterogeneity of rural regional opportunities in terms of poverty chronicity, vulnerability, and access to resources and services as well as demographic variation associated with population dynamics, much can be gained by avoiding one-size-fits-all policy interventions of both the agricultural and rural development sectors. Second, evidence abounds that migrating households move to better access social and economic services with subsequent benefits for family welfare and food security. So, rather than engaging in the discursive policy debate of agriculture versus non-agriculture, instead economic policy ought to encourage greater mobility and diversification of rural livelihoods. Finally, and to complement the continued relevance of diversified rural livelihoods, efficient and effective social safety nets that can offer some level of protection to ever more inchoate and fragmented households are called for.

¹² Entrena-Duran, F., 'Deagrarianization, the growth of the food industry and the construction of new rurality' in F. Entrena-Duran, *Food production and eating habits from around the world: a multidisciplinary approach* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2015) 3,27.

¹³The concept of de-agrarianisation to confront the fundamental feature of the African development taking place over half a century or more; that Sub-Saharan Africa has been urbanising without industrialising. Taking a closer look, it appears that this hypothesis leans heavily on the widely held perception that land or agriculture is the fulcrum of the livelihoods in mostly rural Sub-Saharan Africa. While this may be valid to a certain extent, the minimalist perspective points out that access to land or agriculture may not be always a guarantor of sustainable livelihoods as landholders often fail to convert this asset into income or improve their welfare¹⁴. De-agrarianisation is a wide historical concept that encompasses class, gender, ethnic, and areal dimensions. De-agrarianisation denotes the shedding of the agricultural population to the non-farm sector. The phenomena are characterised by the diversification of rural livelihoods, increased agricultural and non-agricultural wage labour, more commercialisation of forest products, and temporary and permanent migration to new livelihood options in urban centres¹⁵.

The historical dimension of the de-agrarianisation concept can be derived from Ncube¹⁶ who argue that the phenomenon is extensively felt by the developing world which feels the brunt of colonisation and its vestiges. This is buttressed by Amin¹⁷ who classifies countries like Zimbabwe, Namibia, South Africa and Kenya as the labour reserves in which colonialists, through apartheid legislations, enforced monopoly over land. The defining facets of this concept include economic activity re-orientation, occupational adjustment and spatial re-alignment of human settlement characterised by a shift from strictly agrarian patterns. Its measurable manifestations include the diminishing degree of rural household food and basic needs sufficiency, the decline in labour effort relative to non-agricultural labour in rural areas, the decrease in agricultural output per capita and the shrinking of the rural population.

¹³ Bryceson, DF. 'De-agrarianisation and rural employment in sub-Saharan Africa: A sectoral perspective' (1996), 24, *World Development*, 97,111.

¹⁴ Rigg, J. Land, 'Farming, Livelihoods and Poverty: Rethinking the Links in the Rural South' (2006) 34(12), *World Development*, 180,202.

¹⁵ Davis B, Di Giuseppe S, Zezza A., 'Are African households (not) leaving agriculture? Patterns of households' income sources in rural sub-Saharan Africa' (2017), *Food Policy*, doi: 10.1016/j.foodpol.2016.09.018.

¹⁶ Ncube, N., Tanga, P. T and Bhumira, B., 'The Impact of De-agrarianisation on the Socio-economic Well-being of Rural Inhabitants in South Africa' (2014), 48(3), *J Hum Ecol*, 399-406. University of Fort Hare.

¹⁷ Amin, S., 'Unequal Development: an essay on the social formations of Peripheral Capitalism' (1976), New York: Monthly Review Press

Interlinked with the means through which de-agrarianisation is measured are the challenges associated with the use of standard statistics which are the basic mode of measuring or quantifying the process. Census data which classifies people by their main occupation tends to overlook the informants' part-time activities which poses a challenge in the documentation of income diversification in the process of de-agrarianisation¹⁸. Moreover, like any process with a history, gender and ethnic dimension, another challenge arises in evaluating the concept itself. This is propounded by Ntsebeza¹⁹ who argues that the main challenge lies in the welcoming of the process or seeing it as an unfavourable threat to the rural populace.

If one takes the economist hypothesis that all economies start from an agrarian base and move to industrialisation, the concept of de-agrarianisation may shed light on the socio-economic phenomena not only in the rural sub-Saharan but the entirety of the economic spectrum in the sub-continent. Scholars such as Bryceson²⁰ and Nyathi et al²¹ contend that de-agrarianisation may be used as a barometer to gauge the development processes in the sub-continent as non-farm activities are considered to be particularly important to low-income groups, especially women who constitute a larger proportion of the micro-entrepreneurs.

It appears that the phenomenon of de-agrarianisation, though seemingly risky to the rural population's food security, somehow has been increasing gradually shift from farm to non-farm activities in terms of resource allocation and technical support by both the government and private development agencies. Manona²² consolidates this shift concerning the emergence of appropriate technology projects that target mainly women in

¹⁸ Nyathi D, Beremauro R, Takavarasha T, Ndlovu J, 'Diversification and farm household welfare in grassland farm, Kwekwe District, Zimbabwe' (2018), 62(1-3), *J Hum Ecol* 58,68. <https://doi.org/10.31901/24566608.2018/62.1-3.296>

¹⁹ Ntsebeza, L., 'Land and livelihoods in rural South Africa: What prospects for agricultural activities?' (2014) NRF Research Chair Holder Land Reform and Democracy in South Africa.

²⁰ Bryceson, DF., 'De-agrarianisation and rural employment in sub-Saharan Africa: A sectoral perspective' (1996), 24, *World Development*, 97,111.

²¹ Nyathi D, Beremauro R, Takavarasha T, Ndlovu J, 'Diversification and farm household welfare in grassland farm, Kwekwe District, Zimbabwe' (2018), 62(1-3), *J Hum Ecol* 58,68.

²² Manona, C. W., 'De-agrarianisation and Urbanisation of a Rural Economy: Agrarian Patterns in Melani in the Eastern Cape' (1999), Afrika-Studie Centrum Working Paper No. 32. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

the rural areas of the Sub-Sahara. These projects are considered key to increasing the productivity of non-farm activity. Analysis of this shift may point out that this signals the departure from strictly agrarian-based livelihoods towards diversification which leads to rural households that are resilient to stresses and shocks²³. The transformation of rural areas and the simultaneous rise in non-agricultural activities have, in the last decade, become highly salient issues in regional development and agricultural policies. These development trends have resulted in increased engagement and inclusion of traditionally isolated, marginalized rural-based persons and areas into the vibrant national economy, generating new sources of income, new markets, and greater economic interlinkages within and across rural-urban localities. At a more micro level, such development dynamics act as both push and pull factors, increasingly influencing household entry, exit, and vulnerability of households to poverty.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND METHODOLOGY

The discussion of the article focuses on the phenomenon of de-agrarianisation in Sub-Saharan Africa and its implications for rural livelihoods and employment. The article disparages explanations that see the aetiology of de-agrarianisation either in the waning significance of agriculture in the national economy or in the size-induced method of the farm household model, which most studies of de-agrarianisation utilise. A bibliometric methodology was adopted by performing a bibliometric analysis using the R Package to meet the aim of the article²⁴. The bibliometric analysis allows researchers to handle large volumes of scientific data²⁵. The approach is the most popular research strategy in the library and information science field. This study used keywords to generate the bibliography of published research on deagrarianisation, reagrarianisation and livelihoods diversification from Web of Science and Scopus databases. From the Web of Science and Scopus

²³ Mincyte D, 'Rethinking food regime as gender regime: agrarian change and the politics of social reproduction' (2024), 51(1), *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 18-36, DOI: 10.1080/03066150.2022.2157720

²⁴ Goel, S, 'Effect of Deagrarianization at the Household Level on the Scale and Nature of Women's Work in Rural India' (2022), 65, *Ind. J. Labour Econ.* 1053, 1082 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41027-022-00416-3>

²⁵ Davis B, Di Giuseppe S, Zezza A., 'Are African households (not) leaving agriculture? Patterns of households' income sources in rural sub-Saharan Africa' (2017), *Food Policy*. doi: 10.1016/j.foodpol.2016.09.018.

databases the following selected keywords “de-agrarianisation”, “agriculture”, “households”, and “livelihoods diversification” were used. The generated data were analyzed using the R Package bibliometric software to obtain clear and concise results. The documents per author, co-authors per document, collaboration index, authors, sources, keywords plus, and author appearances were among the data that were downloaded from the Web of Science and Scopus databases. In total, 110 original documents on deagrarianisation, livelihoods and smallholder agriculture were used for the review.

4. FINDINGS ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF DE-AGRARIANISATION IN SUB-SAHARA

Agriculture is one of the most important aspects of rural livelihoods which people have long relied on as a survival strategy, especially in Sub-Sahara. Manona²⁶ opines that agricultural production plays a crucial role in the sustaining and development of human social and economic welfare. Kydd²⁷ reveals that the majority of the world’s extremely poor people live in rural areas and have livelihoods which are bound closely to smallholder agriculture as farmers. In addition, Brown²⁸ observes that given that 65 per cent of Africa’s population, on average, derive their livelihoods from rural areas, agriculture and the rural economy play a major role in the lives of many millions of young people, and that will remain the case for quite some time to come. This clearly shows that agriculture is an essential backbone of the rural communities and, therefore, they need to be supported through favourable policies and agricultural inputs. But to fully fathom the role of agriculture in rural livelihoods, there is a need to go beyond the widely-held perception that the Sub-Saharan region is an agrarian community. This comes after this

²⁶ Manona, C. W., ‘De-agrarianisation and Urbanisation of a Rural Economy: Agrarian Patterns in Melani in the Eastern Cape’ (1999), Afrika-Studie Centrum Working Paper No. 32. Cape Town: Oxford University Press

²⁷ Kydd, J., ‘Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods: Is Globalisation Opening or Blocking Paths Out of Rural Poverty?’ (2002), Network Paper No. 121: Agricultural Research & Extension Network (AgREN).

²⁸ Brown, L., ‘Supporting the participation of young people in agriculture and rural development’ (2012), KB Knowledge Brief. National Youth Development Agency (NYDA)

perception has been questioned in countries like South Africa²⁹. Hence, to offer a balanced analysis, this article employs diverse perspectives ranging from the extreme ends of the instrumentalist-minimalist perspectives to the moderate distributionist perspective.

The instrumentalist perspective views access to land and agriculture as the fundamental step towards improving the livelihoods of the rural populace. This perspective is backed by Manona³⁰ who points out that agricultural production plays a crucial role in the sustenance and development of human social and economic welfare. The scholar views agriculture as a fulcrum upon which rural livelihoods evolve, arguing that it goes beyond that as it becomes the functional base for industry, and other life sectors depend on it for existence and continuity. An important aspect of the 'strategic role of agriculture' is that the promotion of smallholder agriculture is a 'win-win' strategy because smallholders are efficient users of resources (for example, compared to commercial agriculture) and also an equitable approach, as it increases returns on assets held by poorer people and puts foodstuffs and cash income directly into the hands of the poor.

However, mere access to land and agriculture alone cannot be guarantors of sustainable livelihoods in rural areas. These must be supported by crucial aspects like the enabling policy environment in terms of land ownership³¹. Enablers like infrastructure, input, access to credit, human skills and development, access to water and viable technology must be in place for the potential of agriculture to be fully exploited in support of rural livelihoods. The potential of agriculture as the fulcrum of livelihood base is further emphasised by the distributionist perspective which affirms the significant role of agriculture in reducing rural poverty in low-income regions like the Sub-Sahara, but goes further to outline that this can be fully realised through the creation or support of the small-scale farmers, ultimately leading to economic growth. However, these two perspectives can be criticised from the standpoint that they view the mere access to land as the panacea to rural

²⁹ Ntsebeza, L., 'Land and livelihoods in rural South Africa: What prospects for agricultural activities?' (2014), NRF Research Chair Holder Land Reform and Democracy in South Africa.

³⁰ Manona, C. W., 'De-agrarianisation and Urbanisation of a Rural Economy: Agrarian Patterns in Melani in the Eastern Cape' (1999), Afrika-Studie Centrum Working Paper No. 32. Cape Town: Oxford University Press

³¹ Agarwal, B., 'Gender and command over property: A critical gap in economic analysis and policy in South Asia' (1994), 22, *World Development*, 1455,1478.

development. One of the proponents of the minimalist perspective is Rigg, who points out that the significance of land or agriculture as a source of income for the rural populace is vanishing with the emergence of non-farm activities and this leads to a scenario where the livelihoods of the poor are becoming increasingly de-linked from the land and farming.

4.1 Drivers of de-agrarianisation

Deagrarianisation is a worldwide phenomenon with widespread social, ecological and economic effects yet there is little consensus on the local or higher-level causes. The working definition of de-agrarianisation of this article emphasised the fact that the concept has a historical dimension to it. In this regard, one can argue that the colonisation process can be seen as the prime driver which triggered the shift from strictly agrarian-based livelihoods to off-farm livelihoods. Ncube *et al*³² provide a classic outline for this argument by pointing out that before the colonisation processes the African people, especially in the Sub-Saharan region, relied heavily on agriculture and farm activities for survival. However, the colonisation process disrupted this status quo through restrictions on access to land and the displacement of the local peoples to reserves. For example, in Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia, the greater part of the land was taken from the indigenous peoples thus reducing the bulk of these people to permanent and migrant workers. Moreover, the colonisation process not only triggered access to land challenges for the indigenous people but also orchestrated drastic change in the ideological outlook on the rationale for agriculture as peasant agriculture was discouraged in favour of agro-industrial production (commercial farming), riding on the aegis of the then dominant modernisation outlook to development³³. This marked the metamorphosis of the previously agrarian-based indigenes to a servile proletariat dependent on the European capitalist system³⁴. De-agrarianisation in South Africa's smallholder communities started even during the colonial era. Colonial and apartheid economies were built on a system of exploiting black labour through an intricate system of accumulation by dispossession that served the purpose of eliminating what in many instances had been a competitive smallholder sector in the 19th

³² Ncube, N., Tanga, P. T and Bhumira, B., 'The Impact of De-agrarianisation on the Socio-economic Well-being of Rural Inhabitants in South Africa' (2014), 48(3), *J Hum Ecol*, 399,406. University of Fort Hare.

³³ Baiphethi, M. N and Jacobs, P. T, 'The contribution of subsistence farming to food security in South Africa. *Agrekon: Agricultural Economics Research*' (2009) 48 Policy and Practice in Southern Africa, 459,482.

³⁴ Hebinck, P., 'De-/re-agrarianisation: Global perspectives' (2018), 61, *Journal of Rural Studies*, 61, 227,235

century. South African smallholders have increasingly become disengaged from farming in recent decades despite the lack of other livelihood opportunities and, in parallel, with the deepening of rural poverty. The deagrarianisation process experienced in South African smallholder communities is, therefore, part of a wider phenomenon described across geographies.

The rapid industrialisation that started expanding after colonisation in some Sub-Saharan Africa fuelled other economic activities that reduced the need for continued subsistence farming. The population of rural areas depends on agricultural and pastoral practices in agricultural societies and varies spatially and temporally with changes driven by industrialisation and urbanisation, which have altered the livelihoods and social stability of rural communities³⁵. The rural population has been exhibiting a persistently declining trend. A study by Manona³⁶ in the Eastern Cape in South Africa discovers that the gradual expansion of civil service into the rural areas and the availability of new jobs resulted from the creation of industrial centres located close to the rural areas in line with industrial decentralisation policy which had been adopted. It has been noted that this enabled many people to retain their rural homes while having access to jobs in close small industrial centres³⁷. Thus, such occupation led rural folks to drift away from agriculture as a livelihood strategy. This deagrarianisation was triggered by infrastructure development that opened rural communities' access to urban areas and industrial development through the construction of factories that offered jobs for rural communities. This condition causes the number of part-time farmers to increase. Syuaib³⁸ also found a case of deagrarianisation that occurred on Palawan Island, the Philippines. Deagrarianisation is marked by the increase in the submission of traditional agricultural practices to commercial agriculture in the agribusiness scheme. Deagrarianisation is shown by the reluctance of the younger generation to continue farming which was carried

³⁵ Akram-Lodhi, A. H., 'The Ties That Bind? Agroecology and the Agrarian Question in the Twenty-First Century' (2021), 48 (4), *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 687,714. doi:10.1080/03066150.2021.1923010.

³⁶ Manona, C. W., 'De-agrarianisation and Urbanisation of a Rural Economy: Agrarian Patterns in Melani in the Eastern Cape' (1999), Afrika-Studie Centrum Working Paper No. 32. Cape Town: Oxford University Press

³⁷ Akram-Lodhi, A. H. 'The Ties That Bind? Agroecology and the Agrarian Question in the Twenty-First Century' (2021) 48 (4), *Journal of Peasant Studies* 687-714. doi:10.1080/03066150.2021.1923010.

³⁸ Syuaib, MF., 'Sustainable Agriculture in Indonesia: Facts and Challenges to keep growing in harmony with environment' (2016), 18(2), *CIGR Journal*. 170,184

out traditionally by their parents. Structural changes due to improved access to education encourage the younger generation to choose work outside agriculture. It is not only in Southeast Asia where cases of deagrarianisation can be found, even in Africa, Europe, and Southern America the phenomenon is discernible. Spain is an example of a country in Europe whose symptoms of deagrarianisation are shown through the increase in abandoned agricultural land. This has an impact on the increase of outsourcing of agricultural production in rural areas. Deagrarianisation occurs due to mining expansion which compels farmers to only do agriculture as part-time jobs.

Several factors have led to the decrease in agricultural activities in Sub-Saharan Africa. In South Africa, de-agrarianisation is attributable to government support grants. Their study found that people now rely on government grants for survival and the youths see no need to be involved in agricultural practices. Most of those governmental grants come in the form of child support grants, disability grants and old age pensions which are viewed as a source of income and lead to the development of reluctance to work on the land. Social grants provide poor households with alternative income which in turn reduces the pressure to embark on subsistence agriculture³⁹.

Globalisation is one of the indirect drivers of de-agrarianisation. The concept comes to the fore when one takes into consideration that due to globalisation, there is increased interaction of the people, including the rural-urban dwellers. As a result of the rural-urban interaction, the rural folk, especially the youth, become more aware of the rural-urban development discrepancies which mostly favour the latter. As a result, the rural youth end up cherishing the standards of the urban folk which are mostly not associated with agriculture. This, coupled with socio-economic changes in ways like improved education, employment opportunities and labour mobility, further devalues agro-based livelihoods, hence fuelling de-agrarianisation. Urbanisation and people's perception that agriculture is for the aged and the uneducated have contributed earnestly to the decline in agriculture⁴⁰. Their study on the impact of de-agrarianisation on the socio-economic well-being of rural inhabitants in South Africa found that the cash economy has made

³⁹ Chitonge, H. 'Land use and rural livelihoods in South Africa: Emerging evidence from the Eastern Cape' (2013) 2 *Journal of Political Economy*, 1,40.

⁴⁰ Ncube, N., Tanga, P. T and Bhumira, B., 'The Impact of De-agrarianisation on the Socio-economic Well-being of Rural Inhabitants in South Africa' (2014), 48(3), *J Hum Ecol*, 399,406.

people believe that the only way to earn a decent living is to find employment in urban areas or on commercial farms and not to be involved in subsistence agriculture.

Historians of Southern Africa have pointed to changes in generational and gender relations in African families since the early 20th century (Carlton, 2000). Wage income diminished controls by fathers over sons, and women began to migrate independently, especially in the second half of the 20th century. Each phase of these complex processes has affected homesteads differently, but there does seem to have been a distinct shift over the last few decades in the degree to which homestead members are prepared to undertake agricultural work together. Older men and women who oversaw household production can no longer rely on the labour of younger family members.

Interlinked with the driver of colonisation, one notices that the neo-liberal economic policies adopted in post-independence Sub-Saharan Africa can also be linked to the phenomenon of de-agrarianisation processes in the region. The Sudanese case can be brought to the fore as a classic illustration to support the case of economic policy as triggering de-agrarianisation. In Sudan, between the 1968 and 1978 period, poverty increased marginally, pegged at 69% in 1978 (rural population below the poverty datum line), but rose rapidly to 83,1 % in 1986 after Sudan implemented the structural adjustment policies⁴¹. In addition, Bryceson⁴² notes that from 1980–95, the widespread enforcement of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) opened the door to de-agrarianisation in the market's search for optimised returns on investment. Peasant agriculture, with its subsistence orientation and relatively low yields, unstandardised agriculture and high transport costs, was the antithesis of the growing dominance of agro-industrial production in the world's agricultural commodity trade circuits. The period of SAPs marked the convergence of global de-agrarianisation and African de-peasantisation reflected in the steady relative decline of African agricultural exports. In one study in Zimbabwe, it was found that the removal of subsidies for peasant farmers was one of the drivers of de-agrarianisation.

⁴¹ Perry, D., 'Fathers, Sons and the State: Discipline and punishment in a Wolof hinterland' (2009) 24(1), *Cultural Anthropology*, 33,67.

⁴² Bryceson, DF., 'De-agrarianisation and rural employment in sub-Saharan Africa: A sectoral perspective' (1996), 24, *World Development*, 97-111.

Climate change has also contributed to this process of de-agrarianisation in Sub-Saharan Africa. In the Msobomvu community in South Africa, it was found that unfavourable weather conditions are another factor contributing to de-agrarianisation⁴³. Participants in their study revealed that the unpredictable rainfall in the area has led to consistent crop failure and subsequently caused people to lose faith in agricultural activities. Continuous droughts in the Sahelian region have had far-reaching implications on the economy and society as they have endangered rural livelihoods, leading to farmers adopting retrogressive coping strategies and livelihood re-orientation. Recurrent droughts and famines in the Darfur region have been seen as critical in discouraging smallholders from pursuing farming. In sub-Saharan Africa, despite the unwarranted assumption that the continent's destiny is necessarily rooted in peasant agriculture, the population is becoming less agrarian year by year. Environmental degradation, which is acknowledged in the Sahel and the Horn regions but equally widespread in Southern and Eastern Africa, has also contributed to the de-agrarianisation process. Despite decades of attention to agricultural development, food security and rural poverty, poverty and food insecurity remain, especially amongst rural dwellers in Asia, Africa and Central America⁴⁴. With the advent of climate change, the challenges only increase and will further intensify as extreme events and variable weather patterns make small-scale production even more difficult. Limited soil fertility which contributes to low yields discourages youngsters from pursuing an agrarian livelihood option.

Rural livelihood diversification encourages de-agrarianisation, especially amongst the young and learned ones. Several scholars have indicated that the increases in the costs of farm inputs in light of the declining farm profitability are discouraging households from continuing to invest in farming. This defeats the economic logic of investing in a venture where there will be deficits in terms of outputs in comparison to the inputs. As a result, the rural farmers end up investing in other livelihood options not linked to agrarian activities. Mabhena⁴⁵ further argues that poor government development policies are to blame for the de-agrarianisation of rural livelihoods by arguing

⁴³ Ncube, N., Tanga, P. T and Bhumira, B., 'The Impact of De-agrarianisation on the Socio-economic Well-being of Rural Inhabitants in South Africa' (2014), 48(3), *J Hum Ecol*, 399-406.

⁴⁴ van der Ploeg, J. D., *The New Peasantries: Rural Development in Times of Globalization* (2nd ed., London: Routledge, 2018).

⁴⁵ Mabhena, C., 'Agrarianisation or De-agrarianisation in the Eastern Cape? The implications for job creation in the agricultural sector' (2011).

that such policies seldom pay attention to the rurality of the rural dwellers. The present scholar refers to the rural Cape case in South Africa where there was the obliteration of the agricultural extension services and the disempowerment of the tribal authorities as development agencies, leading to the urbanisation of the rural areas. One notices that lack of or improper government support to the rural areas works against their livelihood options. Much of the continent's land is arid or semi-arid and not suitable for farming, with climate change bound to reduce arable land further in the future. It is not a coincidence that the majority of African migrants to Europe are from countries closest to Europe, with all or part of their national territory in the Sahel. The rising commercialisation of farmland by urban and rural elites displaces smallholder family farms. It is estimated that forests cover one-third of available rural land. Losing forestland threatens local and regional farming agro-climates and much of the rest of the unutilised arable land is in formerly or current conflict-ridden countries. By contrast, some countries known for their agricultural potential are territorially small (Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda) and now exceptionally densely populated and land-short.

Stiglitz⁴⁶ argues that the loss of cattle was the most common reason mentioned for the abandonment of farming because people then had no means of ploughing. This led to increases in the extent of woodlands and forests because of reduced agriculture. Most people mentioned that most or all of their cattle had died through drought or disease or had been sold but not replaced as people moved away from traditional investment in livestock to monetary savings. This also may be linked to the collapse of agricultural extension services and the reduction of government-sponsored veterinary and dipping services as government priorities shifted to urban development after the political transition. Livestock numbers have decreased but do not attribute this as a reason for a reduction in field cultivation. Lack of capital equipment, problems of crop raiding by animals and unfordable farming inputs were also common reasons for the abandonment of arable farming. A study in the Eastern Cape emanated that an increase in government social grants contributed to deagrarianisation⁴⁷. Farmers were not motivated to

⁴⁶ Stiglitz, J. E., 'Towards a New Paradigm for Development: Strategies, Policies, and Processes' (1998), Prebisch Lecture, Geneva. UNCTAD.

⁴⁷ Ncube, N., Tanga, P. T and Bhumira, B., 'The Impact of De-agrarianisation on the Socio-economic Well-being of Rural Inhabitants in South Africa' (2014), 48(3), *J Hum Ecol*, 399-406.

work in the field knowing that at the end of the month government would pay them social grants⁴⁸.

4.2 The socio-economic implications of de-agrarianisation in rural Sub-Saharan

Given the underlying precedence that agriculture and land formed the basis of rural livelihoods, one can argue that the shift to off-farm activities, although it has been recommended from the standpoint of rural household income diversification, is bound to increase poverty levels. Bryceson and Van Der Laan⁴⁹ concur with this argument; they point out that when people in rural areas are less involved in agricultural activities, there are increasing levels of poverty. Rural poverty in Senegal has been linked to a lack of access to non-farm income. One can refer to the Sudanese case where the real income of the rural poor was increasing at an annual rate of 2, 7% before increased de-agrarianisation. However, it declined at an alarming rate of about 3, 8% due to an acceleration in the reliance on off-farm activities after the adoption of SAPS policies⁵⁰. Rural poverty as a result of de-agrarianisation manifests in various ways, including the adoption of negative coping strategies by former farmers. These strategies include the sale of assets like animals and the sale of firewood and charcoal to ameliorate the challenges experienced due to loss of income from farm activities. This has further negative impacts like environmental degradation. De-agrarianisation may lead to poverty if it occurs in a disorganised manner. The process may ultimately lead to a lack of rural food security. Moreover, it may lead to a decreased level of human security and humanitarian crises such as famine and socio-political instability. South Africa's smallholders have progressively become disengaged from farming despite their lack of alternative livelihood options, resulting in the deepening of rural poverty. Farming's diminished role in rural livelihoods represents a wider trend of deagrarianisation seen across contexts and geographies⁵¹.

⁴⁸ Arya, N., 'Rural Out Migration in Uttarakhand in the Changing Agrarian Scenario' (Telangana State Agricultural University, 2015).

⁴⁹ Bryceson, DF and Van der Laan, C., 'De-agrarianisation in Africa: Proceedings of the De-agrarianisation and Rural Employment' (1994), 20, Working Paper, Leiden: African Studies.

⁵⁰ Perry, D., 'Fathers, Sons and the State: Discipline and punishment in a Wolof hinterland' (2009), 24(1), *Cultural Anthropology*, 33,67.

⁵¹ Fischer K, Johnson E, Visser V and Shackleton S, 'Social drivers and differentiated effects of deagrarianisation: A longitudinal study of smallholder farming in South Africa's Eastern Cape province' (2024), 106, *Journal of Rural Studies*, 103200

Scholars argue that the need to survive household poverty has contributed to the process of deagrarianisation. The potential of land in terms of agriculture becomes diminished, rural people end up relying extensively on purchased food rather than what they produce. Reliance on purchased foodstuffs can further have other implications like the changes in the food cultures of the Sub-Saharan Africans, loss of certain crop species and indigenous knowledge is eroded in the process. Poor nutrition has been noted to be one of the health hazards posed by de-agrarianisation in rural Sub-Sahara. Poor nutrition increases due to the unavailability of healthy food, causing a threat to health. Household poverty compels some households to diversify their livelihood away from farming. Diversification at the household level is viewed as an outcome of dynamic livelihood adaptation to various constraints and opportunities faced by smallholders⁵². Diversification is, therefore, associated with both livelihood survival and distress under deteriorating conditions as well as with livelihood security under improving economic conditions. It is aimed at securing better living standards by reducing risk, vulnerability and poverty, increasing income, enhancing security and increasing wealth. To use livelihood diversification to secure better living standards, rural households have to be able to generate cash, build assets and diversify across farm and nonfarm activities.

Another implication of the processes of de-agrarianisation, is that it exerts pressure in the national economy, thereby increasing government responsibility as more people become dependent on the government support systems. This can be explained from the standpoint that when people move away from farm-related livelihood activities, social and economic needs increase whereas supply will be limited; this results in many people from the rural areas seeking employment in the urban areas to meet their needs, pressurising the national economy. This inevitably leads to civil strife and social unrest, especially taking into consideration that most of the people who leave the rural set-up are the working class, comprised mostly of the youths.

Unemployment and rural-urban migration are the correlates which are strongly linked with the phenomenon of de-agrarianisation. This becomes more apparent when taking into consideration that the conceptualisation of the phenomena of de-agrarianisation emphasises the shedding of labour by the agricultural sector to other non-farm activities. Taking into cognisance

⁵² Ellis, F, *Rural Livelihoods and Diversity in Developing Countries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 1-15.

that most of the farm activities are in the rural areas, the shed labour force in turn treks to the urban areas in search of employment.

Plaatje⁵³ posits that the decline in agricultural activities leads to the loss of human capital like entrepreneurial skills associated with agriculture. Inevitably, loss of human capital affects the national economy in a wider sense and it affects the individuals at the household level as they must start acquiring new skills for survival and income generation. Furthermore, loss of skills translates into a decrease in income at household levels which can have further negative implications like the use of gender in the prioritisation of sending children to school. This normally impacts negatively on the girl child in African societies. It is important to point out that the livelihood strategies pursued by both men and women who have drifted away from farming have a bearing on gender roles. According to Seppala⁵⁴ the alternatives for women have been noted to be not favourable compared to men's coping strategies. In Tanzania, rural women heading their households, and widows living alone, are often socially marginalised and may be forced to find employment in unprofitable occupations (such as harvesting natural resources) or even prostitution, while patronage is, in many cases, a crucial element of access to activities such as intra-regional trade.

It has been understood that subsistence production and/or smallholder production can increase food supplies and thus cushion households from food price shocks, thereby improving household food security, deagrarianisation accentuates the vulnerability of the rural areas by robbing the rural sector of its economic pillars. The vulnerability of the rural sector can have further impacts on other socio-economic indicators like gender equality and child safety. Juvenile girls can be married off to wealthier families to avert the challenges which come with the mentioned shocks⁵⁵.

Demographic changes emanating from migration, especially by the economically active, to urban areas in Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the challenges accompanying the process of deagrarianisation. A study by

⁵³ Plaatje, S, *British Imperialism and South African Resistance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002) 1-15.

⁵⁴ Seppala, P., 'The Politics of Economic Diversification: Reconceptualizing the Rural informal sector in Southeast Tanzania' (1996) 27 *Development and Change*, 557,78.

⁵⁵ Corno, L., and Voena, A., 'Child marriage as informal insurance: Empirical evidence and policy simulations' (2023), 162, *Journal of Development Economics*, 103047, 0304, 3878, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2023.103047>.

Manyani⁵⁶ in Gwanda, Zimbabwe, found that due to de-agrarianisation, rural people have become mobile in search of income. It is revealed that migration and constant movements by the villagers in search of income-generating activities have resulted in a change in the household demographic profiles in the village of Ntalale. Manyani unveils that 85% of the households interviewed were mostly composed of the age groups 0-16 years and 45 and above age groups. The 17-44 years were revealed by the key informant in the study to have migrated temporarily and, in some instances, permanently to border countries of South Africa, and Botswana, including beyond African borders as well as in local cities of the country.

The AIDS epidemic triggered a demographic downturn. Higher mortality of women and men of childbearing ages, fear of AIDS and the expanding number of orphans challenged pro-natalist attitudes, bringing negative aspects of customary law to the fore. In patrilineal areas, the death of a male household head threatened the continued land usage rights of his wife and children, who were vulnerable to land dispossession by the deceased husband's brothers. Orphans sought succour with extended family members or attempted to fend for themselves as child-headed households. Teenage boys were the least likely to find homes with relations, whereas teenage girls could generally find food and accommodation as house helpers for relatives, though they occupied a subordinate position relative to the children of the household head. Furthermore, where the depopulation of adults in economically active ages started becoming acute, new forms of land tenure, be it rental or increased land sales as well as labour-saving patterns of cropping and land use, were on the ascendance.

Deagrarianisation typically leads to a gradual reduction in the economic importance of the primary sector in GDP, as well as in farm employment and activities related to agricultural labour for income generation in rural settings⁵⁷. These reductions, in turn, typically translate into a progressive decrease in the weight of agriculture and animal husbandry in the life of these environments. Simultaneously, progressive growth has been witnessed in

⁵⁶ Manyani, C. R. S., 'Crisis Does Not Spell The End. The peasantry during a decade of economic decline in Zimbabwe: A case of Gwanda South (Ntalale)' (2011), A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of Masters Of Arts In Development Studies. The Hague, Netherlands.

⁵⁷ Bryceson, D.F., 'Gender and generational patterns of African deagrarianization: Evolving labour and land allocation in smallholder peasant household farming, 1980-2015' (2019) 113 *World Development* 60, 72. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2018.08.021>.

different activities that are not related to agriculture⁵⁸. This growth leads to a progressive reduction in cultivation areas, especially smallholdings, and entails significant changes in the social structures of rural environments that result in the collapse of the historical organisation of production and labour at the level of both the domestic unit and the regional agricultural labour market.

Paradoxically, this gradual reduction of agrarian activity simultaneously leads to an intensification of agriculture, which is without precedent in the history of humanity. Today, this intensification is increasingly questioned due to its long-term outcomes for the environment and the socio-economic circumstances of farmers. Soil fertility deterioration, the rising requirement for inputs, and vulnerability to the ebb and flow of market prices are some of the major negative factors related to intensive farming⁵⁹. Moreover, with the aim of maintaining the productivity of their lands, farmers are often forced to augment the quantities of those inputs (seeds, fertilizers, phytosanitary products, etc.) that increase their production costs and worsen environmental conditions. Even the very food security of many growers is frequently affected by this intensification of agriculture, given that oftentimes it entails the transition from a remarkable diversity of products, which is typical in traditional subsistence farming, to the mono-cropping system, which is characteristic of the large modernised farms currently so widespread. Thus, in these circumstances, many families no longer cultivate the majority of the commodities that they consume and, consequently, are now increasingly dependent on market price fluctuations. This trend is rooted in classical Marxian and functionalist approaches that argue that industrialisation, coupled with the introduction of new domestic technologies, resulted in significantly curtailing family functions and transforming the household from a unit of production to a unit of consumption.

A broader view of southern Africa should also caution against linear views of de-agrarianisation. Insofar as this concept means that a smaller proportion of the total population engages in agriculture and a smaller proportion of national economies and household incomes derive from agriculture, then it

⁵⁸ Nyathi D, Beremauro R, Takavarasha T, Ndlovu J, 'Diversification and farm household welfare in grassland farm, Kwekwe District, Zimbabwe' (2018) 62(1-3) *J Hum Ecol* 58-68.

⁵⁹ Pritchard, B et al., "How Does the Ownership of Land Affect Household Livelihood Pathways Under Conditions of Deagrarianization? 'Hangin in', 'Stepping up' and 'Stepping Out' in two North Indian Villages". (2017) 38 *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, 41,57. doi:10.1111/stjg.12180

has strong purchase. But if it is taken to imply an overall decline in agricultural production then it is not convincing. Parts of Southern Africa as a whole have experienced a boom in agricultural production in the last decade. Malawi is a key example, where, after regular famines between 2002 and 2006, maize production, mostly by smallholders, increased nearly threefold between 2006 and 2011⁶⁰. This was largely in response to state investment in starter packs of seed and fertiliser, as well as generally good prices. The pattern was replicated less dramatically in other countries, notably Zambia, Mozambique and Tanzania, although a higher proportion of maize was probably grown on commercial farms than in Malawi.

After the disastrous impact of fast-track land reform in Zimbabwe, when agricultural production declined precipitously to less than half its previous level, evidence is being found of some smallholder revival. It is also imperative to note that most of the deagrarianisation literature only cursorily examines the decline in the share of agriculture in rural incomes without further consideration of how the broader landscapes and seemingly un- or under-used arable spaces are then used or interpreted. The literature pays little attention to the meaning of land and how the landscape has transformed in time from a 'productive' to a 'consumptive' or 'extractive' landscape⁶¹. A good case is the growth of small-scale mining activities in agrarian settings in Zimbabwe. The newly resettled households are taking advantage of gold resource endowment in their respective areas to reconfigure their livelihood portfolios⁶² (Nyathi et al, 2018). The narrowly defined agrarian has certainly diminished and been largely replaced by a resource use pattern that hinges on the rural being a home but has not disappeared. This is despite the reorientation of rural livelihoods towards increasing reliance on 'outside' sources (e.g. pensions, remittances, wages, bought foodstuffs) and away from planting field crops as a major source of livelihood. The degree to which this

⁶⁰ Chirwa E and Dorward A, 'Agricultural Input Subsidies and Malawi's Recent Experience 2005–2010' (2016) Index Mundi Agricultural Statistics, available at <http://www.indexmundi.com/agriculture/?country>.

⁶¹ Bryceson DF, "Who Cares? Family and Lineage Coherence and Caring Capacity during Rural Malawi's AIDS Crisis." In H. Bertram and N. Ehlert (eds), *Family, Ties and Care* (Berlin: Barbara Budrich Publisher 2011) 503–20.

⁶² Nyathi D, Beremauro R, Takavarasha T, Ndlovu J, 'Diversification and farm household welfare in grassland farm, Kwekwe District, Zimbabwe' (2018), 62(1–3), *J Hum Ecol* 58,68.

transformation occurs cannot simply be explained by class or socio-economic differentiation⁶³.

4.3 Gender and De-agrarianisation

The agricultural sector of Africa is dominated by female food producers and processors, the majority of whom face limited access to productive sets, including land. This is mainly due to some socio-cultural factors. The women thus find it difficult to improve their productivity levels and incomes and to break away from the vicious circle of low productivity, low income and poverty. In poor households, according to the World Bank⁶⁴, having land rights could alleviate a woman's poverty and the household's risk of remaining poor. This is because women's access to productive assets has a positive effect on household welfare. Several scholars indicate that women's unequal land rights vis-a-vis men as foundational to rural African gender inequalities and female poverty. Under customary rural land tenure, usufruct rights, rather than legal statutory rights, were and continue to be the main form of land access for women. However, women are likely to be stripped of these rights at the time of divorce or widowhood in matrilineal as well as patrilineal societies.

Women's role in agriculture has been reconfigured by the process of deagrarianisation⁶⁵. Most women workers are either working as unpaid labour on their family farms or are landless workers working for wages on others' farms. However, in recent years, deagrarianisation at the household level has been seen in terms of a decrease in the proportion of households that earn their primary income from agriculture as well as the withdrawal of women from agriculture. While multiple studies have focused on migrant status and remittance flows, there has been less emphasis on the impact of out-migration on women and children at the source site, and how it impacts the rural production system in general. Increased involvement of children in cattle rearing and cultivation has been observed due to a decline in human

⁶³ Nyathi, D., and Ndlovu, J., 'Livelihood Diversification and Household Food Security in Selected Agrarian Settings of Western Zimbabwe' (2021) Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security World Sustainability Series, 349,359.

⁶⁴ The World Bank annual report, (1995), Washington, D.C: World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/179751468314378230/The-World-Bank-annual-report-1995>

⁶⁵ Goel, S., 'Effect of Deagrarianization at the Household Level on the Scale and Nature of Women's Work in Rural India' (2022), 65, Ind. J. Labour Econ. 1053,1082. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41027-022-00416-3>

resources and enhanced wage rates in the labour market. These changes at the source site have created vulnerable conditions for women and children.

Other potential challenges to rural livelihoods include the rising feminisation of agriculture, increased youth unemployment and poor health. Feminisation, often the result of male out-migration, can leave the household with labour constraints, but in some situations may help to decrease livelihood vulnerability. Other places are seeing female out-migration, leaving the very young in the care of the elderly⁶⁶. Feminisation may result in a shift to other farming practices (for example, in many parts of rural Kenya, livestock are managed by men and crops by women), with possibly negative or positive outcomes. African countries are in various stages of deagrarianisation and urbanisation. In some countries, artisanal mining has acted as a labour-absorbing sector in addition to urban migration and involvement in the non-farming sector in rural areas. Contrary to the quantitative labour survey data which report high levels of unemployment and economic inactivity on the part of women, labour time measurements reveal that women's seeming underemployment is largely taken up in domestic chores, which are especially arduous and time-consuming in rural areas⁶⁷.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DE-AGRARIANISATION AND SUSTAINABLE RURAL-LIVELIHOODS

Getting agriculture moving requires investment, and this means private individuals, businesses and the state working together. Yet, a vibrant agricultural sector is always reliant on solid state support to provide basic infrastructure, extension support, and public research. This has been a long-term lesson, both in Zimbabwe and elsewhere. Following land reform in 2000, there has been little support from the government, donors or others. Where subsidies have been offered they have often been misused. With new people on the land, a major investment is required to reconfigure the basic infrastructure for new uses. The old patterns relevant to large-scale farms are no longer appropriate. Investing in roads, schools, health clinics, dams, irrigation schemes, dip tanks and so on is essential. While individual

⁶⁶ Gutura, P and Tanga, P. T, 'Boosting Their Stomachs: The role of social grants in South Africa' (2014), 6(2), *Journal of Economics and Behavioural Studies*. 105,119.

⁶⁷ Yaro, J. A., 'Is deagrarianisation real? A study of livelihood activities in rural northern Ghana' (2006) 44(01), *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 125,156. doi:10.1017/S0022278X05001448

entrepreneurs are making a difference through private investment, these basic public investments are a vital complement. In addition, research and extension is vital. However, the new farmers are often highly educated and well-connected. This opens up new opportunities: the old-style intensive extension system probably does not make sense. For example, support for marketing or input supply via mobile phone updates, agricultural extension or business planning advice offered via the Internet offers real opportunities. One of the big constraints on agriculture currently is “finance”. Approaches to loan arrangements with new forms of collateral are required, with state guarantees to private bank loans. Accessible, cheap “finance” could open up multiple opportunities.

To address the challenges that stem from de-agrarianisation, several scholars have suggested a wide range of policies and approaches. However, as highlighted in the introduction of this article, the challenge lies in whether one welcomes the concept or views it as a threat to the livelihood or not. To deal with the challenges that emanate from the shift from agrarian to off-farm livelihoods, the national governments must address poverty at the national level. This can be done by putting more emphasis on agriculture as a major source of income. One notices that this is linked to the instrumentalist and the distributionist perspectives which call for access to land to be consolidated by an enabling policy environment which must include access to credit, viable technology, access to water and sustainable land ownership policies. Moreover, to reverse the impacts which come with the processes of de-agrarianisation, there is a need for government-private sector partnerships in programmes and policy implementation.

The advantages of the private sector may include less bureaucratic channels and proximity to the rural communities and, therefore, must be fully exploited by the government structures. Partnerships with the private sector become handy, especially in the Sub-Saharan region taking into consideration that most of the governments are cash-strapped and face human resources challenges. Borras points out that programmes designed ostensibly to redress historic injustices and to promote small-holder agriculture have been systematically manipulated by the black elite to maintain or increase their control over land. This further deepens inequality amongst the formerly disenfranchised black communities and further pushes the rural poor into squalid living conditions. Hence programmes like land restitution must be executed in a transparent manner characterised by in-place accountability mechanisms. Moreover, there must be planned interventions which aim at changing the social perceptions towards agriculture and other agrarian-based

livelihoods; this comes after an observation whereby agro-based livelihoods are viewed, mostly by the younger generations, as an activity for the elderly which has no commercial output.

A study conducted in Tanzania found that young people considered agriculture to be a dirty activity which lacks suitable facilities. Hence, African governments must strive to change such perceptions and outlooks towards agriculture. The socialisation processes in African society condition young people, especially young men, to pursue survival modes which are de-linked with agriculture. It is further argued that young men are conditioned to engage in violent conflicts and migrant labour rather than kinship obligations and duties that include working as agricultural labourers. This then puts the responsibility on communities to socialise the young people in a manner which does not vilify agriculture and other farm-related livelihood strategies. Contract farming is rampant in Zimbabwe at the moment. Indeed, more generally across Africa, there is growing interest in linking up smallholder farmers with larger business operations to produce and market certain agricultural commodities. Advocated by the World Bank and others, it seems like a perfect 'win-win' scenario. Smallholders get access to inputs and markets, and agribusiness gets guaranteed products at good prices, without having to take over large areas of land and produce everything themselves. Thus, in the great 'land grab' debate, some offer contract farming, with smallholders linked into global value chains, as an alternative.

Security of land tenure is an essential prerequisite for successful production and investment in agriculture. Tenure security arises through a variety of means. Existing legislation allows for a wide range of potential tenure types, including freehold title, regulated leases, permits and communal tenure under 'traditional' systems. All have their pros and cons. Policymakers must ask how tenure security can be achieved within available resources and capacity; how safeguards can be put in place to prevent land grabbing or land concentration; and what assurances must be made to ensure that private credit markets function effectively. Lessons from across the world suggest there is no one-size-fits-all solution centred on freehold tenure. Instead, a flexible system of land administration is required one that allows for expansion and contraction of farm sizes, as well as entry and exit from farming. While the excesses of elite patronage and land grabbing must be addressed through a land audit, a successful approach, overseen by an independent, decentralised authority, must not be reliant on technocratic diktat.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing the findings of these two levels of analyses together could lead quite naturally to a sectoral perspective with attendant policy implications. The literature review reveals some important issues for reflection and further research: Firstly, because of persistent low agricultural productivity and declining farm sizes coupled with rising population, SSA's structural and agricultural transformation appears to move very slowly. In addition, the transformation path differs from the one taken by developed economies in Europe, America or Asia, where urbanisation and industrialisation accompanied the rural transformations. Although this leaves farming as the main employment option for the majority, there is an important role for livelihood diversification in employing those smallholders who are forced to straddle between farm and nonfarm activities or to completely exit farming. Secondly, rural farm and nonfarm livelihood diversification is of increasing importance for economic growth, poverty reduction, food security and the creation of employment. Evidence from studies in rural SSA indicates their positive welfare impacts on income, wealth, consumption, nutrition, agricultural productivity and food security. However, there is limited asset and income accumulation, especially from poor households. These households diversify their livelihoods for survival purposes. Thirdly, it is imperative to realise that diversification as already indicated does not necessarily imply abandoning farming completely. Some non-farm activities are used to re-agrarianise livelihoods for example through buying inputs, hiring labour to till the land and in some instances. Given that de-agrarianisation is projected to increase poverty, unemployment, poor nutritional status and gender imbalances, there is a need for governments and non-state actors to prioritise funding rural agricultural smallholder farmers.

7. CONCLUSION

This article interrogated some recent studies on structural and agricultural transformation, and rural livelihood diversification, with a special focus on deagrarianisation in SSA. Citing statistical evidence, this article has argued that sub-Saharan Africa is steadily becoming less agrarian. None of the existing theoretical approaches offer focused enquiry into the process of deagrarianisation. Weighing up the strengths and weaknesses of existing approaches, however, does suggest useful analytical directions. An understanding of deagrarianisation could be pursued at two levels: as a long-term historical process and as an integral part of rural households' short-to-medium-term livelihood strategies. Diversifying rural livelihoods promotes

de-agrarianization, particularly among educated and younger generations. Several scholars have indicated that the increases in the costs of farm inputs in light of the declining farm profitability are discouraging households from continuing to invest in farming. Policymakers must ask how tenure security can be achieved within available resources and capacity; how safeguards can be put in place to prevent land grabbing or land concentration; and what assurances must be made to ensure that private credit markets function effectively. Lessons from across the world suggest there is no one-size-fits-all solution centred on freehold tenure. Instead, a flexible system of land administration is required one that allows for expansion and contraction of farm sizes, as well as entry and exit from farming.