

AFRICAN ISSUES

ZIMBABWE'S LAND REFORM MYTHS & REALITIES

Ian Scoones, Nelson Marongwe, Blasio Mavedzenge
Jacob Mahenehene, Felix Murimbarimba & Chrispen Sukume



AFRICAN ISSUES

**Zimbabwe's
Land Reform**

**Myths
& Realities**

IAN SCOONES
NELSON MARONGWE
BLASIO MAVEDZENGE
JACOB MAHENEHENE
FELIX MURIMBARIMBA
CHRISPEN SUKUME



 JAMES CURREY



JACANA MEDIA

James Currey
is an imprint of
Boydell & Brewer Ltd
PO Box 9, Woodbridge
Suffolk IP12 3DF
and of

Boydell & Brewer Inc.
668 Mt Hope Avenue
Rochester, NY 14620, USA
www.boydellandbrewer.com
www.jamescurrey.com



Weaver Press
Box A1922
Avondale, Harare
Zimbabwe
www.weaverpresszimbabwe.com

Jacana Media (Pty) Ltd
10 Orange Street
Sunnyside, Auckland Park 2092
South Africa
www.jacana.co.za

© Ian Scoones, Nelson Marongwe, Blasio Mavedzenge,
Jacob Mahenehene, Felix Murimbarimba and Chrispen Sukume 2010

First published 2010

1 2 3 4 5 14 13 12 11 10

All rights reserved. Except as permitted under current legislation,
no part of this work may be photocopied, stored in a retrieval system,
published, performed in public, adapted, broadcast, transmitted, recorded
or reproduced in any form or by any means – electronic, mechanical,
without the prior permission of the copyright owner

The right of the authors to be identified as
the authors of this work has been asserted in accordance with
sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Zimbabwe's land reform: myths and realities. -- (African issues)

1. Land reform--Zimbabwe--History--21st century.

I. Series II. Scoones, Ian.

333.3'16891'090511-dc22

ISBN 978-1-84701-024-7 (James Currey paper)

ISBN 978-1-77922-110-0 (Weaver Press paper)

ISBN 978-1-77009-985-2 (Jacana paper)

The publisher has no responsibility for the continued existence or accuracy of URLs for external or
third-party internet websites referred to in this book, and does not guarantee that any content on
such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

This publication is printed on acid-free paper

Typeset by
forzalibro designs, Cape Town
in 9/11 Melior with Optima display

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham and Eastbourne

This is an important, exciting and hugely impressive study which throws original light on the impacts of Zimbabwe's controversial Fast Track Land Reform Programme in one province, Masvingo. It makes a major contribution to our understanding of these complex events, moving away from standard myths and stereotypes to paint a rich and nuanced picture. It is without doubt a major contribution to scholarship which deserves to be widely read. *Robin Palmer, Mokoro Ltd, Oxford; formerly Global Land Adviser, Oxfam GB*

This book represents arguably the most comprehensive empirical evidence challenging the popular myths that Zimbabwe's land reform has been a total failure, attributed to political cronyism and lack of investment. The book will be most instructive for South Africa and Namibia as they ponder a way forward with their own land reform challenges. *Mandivamba Rukuni, Professor and Director, Wisdom Afrika Leadership Academy; formerly Chair, Commission of Inquiry into Zimbabwe's Land Tenure Systems*

This book is a comprehensive assessment of the nature of agrarian change during the last decade. It captures the diverse range of real life responses of newly resettled family farms and the new small to medium scale commercial farmers to changing commodity and financial markets within the new agrarian landscape, during a period of economic distress. *Sam Moyo, Professor and Director, African Institute for Agrarian Studies, Harare*

This important study presents compelling evidence that the accepted view that land reform in Zimbabwe has been a total disaster is inaccurate and highly misleading. It breaks new ground in its exploration of livelihood dynamics and the complexities of social differentiation within redistributive land reform. It is likely to influence both scholarship and emerging policy frameworks in the 'new' Zimbabwe. *Ben Cousins, Research Chair on Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies, University of the Western Cape*

Whatever you thought about the land issue in Zimbabwe, be prepared to change your mind. Events in Zimbabwe since 2000 have been so coloured by superficial media reporting and obscured by strident political posturing that little attention has been directed to what has become of the thousands of families that received land following the occupations. Despite the unevenness of outcomes to date, they have succeeded in establishing a base for themselves as serious producers with the capacity to contribute significantly to Zimbabwe's agricultural economy. *Bill Kinsey, Professor, Ruzivo Trust and Free University Amsterdam*

This fascinating study critically engages with a question being posed across Africa, as well as other regions: is small-scale agriculture doomed, as conventional ideas about development trajectories posit, or does it have a role that would be productive and equitable in a globalised world? *Pauline Peters, Professor, Center for International Development, Harvard University*

Controversy over the Mugabe regime, not least the consequences of its 'fast-track' land reform since 2000, too often generates more heat than light. This makes all the more important sound, well-grounded empirical research as reported in this study of agrarian change in the first decade of land reform in Masvingo Province. The design of the research, how it was conducted, its findings, the sensitivity and illumination of their interpretation and the authors' ability to connect Zimbabwean specificities with wider literatures and debates, make for an outstanding contribution. This book is as innovative and valuable as it was necessary. *Henry Bernstein, Professor of Development Studies in the University of London at the School of Oriental and African Studies*

This is an excellent book on the political economy of land reform and livelihoods in Zimbabwe that radically alters the boundary of existing knowledge on this highly controversial issue. The relevance of this study goes far beyond Zimbabwe: anyone interested in understanding the relationship between land, political power and rural livelihoods should read this book. *Saturnino M. Borrás Jr., Canada Research Chair in Development International Development Studies, Saint Mary's University, Halifax*

Much of Zimbabwe's land reform policy since 2000 was unwise, cruel or corrupt. Yet beneficiaries responded by using land and labour, and producing output, in different ways from the big pre-reform farms. Both casual and official observers missed this, reinforcing myths of unredeemed failure. The authors' careful fieldwork, in 400 farms over nine years, provides a powerful and reasoned alternative narrative. *Michael Lipton, Research Professor, University of Sussex*

This book is essential reading for those who wish to go deeper into the complexities and often unexpected outcomes of Zimbabwe's post-2000 land reform. It provides a richly detailed and eloquent examination of a radically altering agrarian landscape in a highly contested environment. *Amanda Hammar, Professor in African Studies, University of Copenhagen*

This is an important book that injects substantial new empirical material into controversies over land reform in Zimbabwe. It is bound to stimulate new debate and become a prime point of reference and is essential reading for policy makers and academics concerned with agrarian intervention in southern Africa. *JoAnn McGregor, Department of Geography, University College London*

This book gives us a detailed picture of the restructuring of the agricultural economy and the diversity in people's livelihoods that land reform brought to the province of Masvingo. It is a picture that defies generalisation, encompassing an extraordinary mix of shifting strategies, successes and failures. *Jocelyn Alexander, Professor of Commonwealth Studies, University of Oxford*

In this book, the pervasive views that Zimbabwe's land reform has been a disaster, causing food shortage, cutting off investment and benefiting only a coterie of 'cronies' are subject to the scrutiny of in-depth surveys over time, and on that basis dismissed as 'myths'. Material for an evidence-based verdict is now to hand, and very welcome. *Lionel Cliffe, Emeritus Professor, University of Leeds*

This book is required reading for all interested in going beyond the rhetoric and media headlines of the controversial land reforms in Zimbabwe. *Admos Chimhowu, Institute for Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester*

At last – a book that stretches across all the common-place myths and polarisations by delivering thorough empirical research and critical analysis to reveal the changing complexities, potentialities and pitfalls of Zimbabwe's dramatic agrarian reform. Highly focused, detailed, yet accessible and provocative, positive but uncompromising, this is a must-read for anyone concerned with land and livelihoods in Zimbabwe, the region and beyond. *Joost Fontein, Department of Anthropology and Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh*

LIST OF FIGURES, TABLES & BOXES



FIGURES

1.1	Economic trends since Independence	27
2.1	Map of Masvingo province, showing study areas	39
2.2	Rainfall patterns in Masvingo province	41
4.1	House qualities by scheme type	79
4.2	Ox ploughs	82
4.3	Scotch-cart ownership	82
5.1	Fertiliser use trends, 1994-95 to 2008-09 season (tonnes)	97
5.2	Cane productivity over six farming seasons from settlement	116
5.3	Cattle populations in Masvingo province: 1975-2005	118
5.4	Herd composition in Masvingo resettlement herds	119
5.5	Disease incidence in Masvingo province (reported cases), 1995-2005	123
7.1	Maize production trends, 1993-94 to 2008-09	150
7.2	Sorghum and millet (pearl and finger) production, 1995-96 to 2008-09	150
7.3	Maize markets connected to Clare Farm, Gutu	152
7.4	The beef commodity chain in Masvingo, 2008	153
7.5	The sugar cane value chain	158
7.6	Cotton and tobacco production trends	160

TABLES

1.1	National land distribution pattern	4
1.2	Emerging agrarian structure: estimated landholdings (2007)	6
1.3	FTLRP: extent and distribution in 2008	7
1.4	Parliamentary election results (% of votes)	29
2.1	Overview of land distribution in Masvingo province, 2009	33
2.2	Fast track resettlement in Masvingo province, 2009	34
2.3	Cluster profiles	40
2.4	Site profiles	42
2.5	A socio-economic profile of the study sites	44
2.6	Settler profile across schemes (% of households)	53
2.7	Distribution of war veterans by origins and scheme type (%)	55
2.8	Land allocation by gender	56
3.1	Success ranking criteria – quotes from the ranking discussions	62
3.2	Age of household head by scheme type (%)	70
3.3	Educational achievement of household head by scheme type (%)	70
3.4	Agricultural training of household head by scheme type (%)	71
3.5	Church affiliation of household head by scheme type (%)	72

3.6	Household sizes and composition at settlement	73
4.1	Amount of land cleared by 2008	78
4.2	Changes in the holdings of cattle (owned cattle plus loaned in) at settlement and 2007-08	80
4.3	Investment in productive assets by cane farmers (N=35)	83
4.4	Gardens, irrigation and domestic water sources	84
4.5	Planting of trees and building conservation measures	87
4.6	Average investments since settlement per household	87
4.7	Keeping livestock in original homes	92
5.1	Trends in draught power strategies (% of households)	100
5.2	Percentage of households who purchased fertiliser	102
5.3	Crop production from 2008 and 2009 harvests compared by site	104
5.4	Crop production from 2008 and 2009 harvests compared by scheme type and success group	106
5.5	Percentage of farmers harvesting greater than a tonne of maize	108
5.6	Maize sales, 2006-09	109
5.7	Distribution of crop sales (50kg bags) by success group and scheme type (% of households)	110
5.8	Changes in cotton production in Uswhaushava, Chiredzi cluster, 2001-08 harvests	114
5.9	Average amount of fertilisers applied per season in kg per hectare	116
5.10	Mean cattle holdings: changes by scheme type and success group	118
5.11	Changes in ownership of goats and sheep: from settlement to 2008	120
6.1	Patterns of permanent and temporary labour hiring	132
6.2	Labour hiring by activity across success groups	134
6.3	Labour dynamics across the study sites	140
6.4	Labour-sharing and collective labour arrangements	144
7.1	National patterns of crop production (2000-01 to 2008-09) and percentage change compared to 1990s averages ('000 tonnes)	148
7.2	Sugar production in the post-2000 period	157
8.1	Non-farm income earning across the study sites	170
8.2	Migration patterns by success group and A2 households	182
8.3	Percentage of households receiving remittances (and percentages receiving different forms)	184
10.1	Socio-economic differentiation by study site and success group	222
10.2	A livelihood typology for new resettlement households	228

BOXES

8.1	Natural resource-based livelihood diversification, Mwenezi cluster	175
9.1	The Commercial Sugar Cane Farmers' Association	208

PREFACE & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



The research reported in this book has been undertaken in Masvingo province since 2000, first under the auspices of the 'Sustainable Livelihoods in Southern Africa' project, and subsequently focusing on livestock as an extension to the 'Crop-Livestock Integration' project, both supported by the UK Department for International Development and coordinated by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex. The main fieldwork, from 2006, was undertaken as part of the regional 'Livelihoods after Land Reform in Southern Africa' project (www.lalr.org.za) which was coordinated by Professor Ben Cousins at the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies at the University of the Western Cape and funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council and Department for International Development ESRC/DFID Joint Scheme for Research on International Development (Poverty Alleviation) (Grant No. RES-167-25-0037), and involved studies in Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

The Livelihoods after Land Reform project research team in Zimbabwe was led by Dr Nelson Marongwe, an urban and rural planner, of the Centre for Applied Social Sciences Trust in Harare. He has been supported by Professor Ian Scoones, originally an agricultural ecologist, based at IDS, and Dr Chrispen Sukume, an agricultural economist from the University of Zimbabwe. The Masvingo province field team was led by B.Z. Mavedzenge, formerly the regional team leader of the Farming Systems Research Unit (FSRU) of the Department for Research and Specialist Services in the Ministry of Agriculture, but now of the Agritex (agricultural extension) department in Masvingo. He is also an A1 resettlement farmer in the province. He worked with Felix Murmibarimba, formerly also of FSRU and then Agritex, but now a full-time A2 sugar cane farmer in Hippo Valley, and Jacob Mahenehene, who farms in the communal areas near Chikombedzi, as well as having a new resettlement plot in an informal site in Mwenezi district. Dr William Wolmer, formerly of IDS, was a key member of the team until 2006, and his pick-up truck continued to keep the field team moving thereafter. We were assisted in the field by: Joice Zivhu, Vimbai Museva, Mr Tagarira, Mrs Matura, Wilfred Sorofo, Rodgers Ndikudze, Virimai Madzivire,

Ushoma Senzeni, Mjurindi Taru, Christopher Shangurai, Trust Chaput-sira, James Todhlana, Onias Magweregwede and Edmore Makovere. Tafadzwa Mavedzenge in Masvingo and Herbert Ntuli and Emmanuel Ziyenga at the University of Zimbabwe helped with data input and further data analysis was carried out by Alvaro Pascual Martinez at IDS. Thanks are also due to Maggie Klousia at IDS who helped with the references and Murray McCartney of Weaver Press, who edited the manuscript.

The research team came from very different backgrounds, with different experiences, outlooks and political persuasions. It made for an interesting, but productive, dynamic. We were always there to challenge each other's assumptions and biases, but what held the group together was the commitment to explore the empirical realities on the ground, and root our analysis and policy recommendations in such solid evidence. In this effort we have been helped by many others. In particular, we have had enormous support from those in the field, both farmers and officials. The period of study has not been easy for anyone in Zimbabwe, and research was especially difficult at times for both logistical and political reasons. Farmers in our study areas spent large amounts of their time sharing their experiences and answering our seemingly endless questions. Quotes have been anonymised in the text with an initial. In addition, we have had continued support from Ministry of Agriculture officials in Masvingo province and most notably N. Pambirei, the Provincial Agricultural Extension Officer, who over many years has been a great supporter of research in the province, as well as a highly astute commentator on and reviewer of our work.

We would also like to acknowledge the support of the Livelihoods after Land Reform reference group, including Jun Borrás, Johann Kirsten, Sam Moyo, Robin Palmer and Cheryl Walker. The book has substantially improved thanks to careful reviews from Ben Cousins, JoAnn McGregor, Sam Moyo and Robin Palmer. This is only one of a number of field-based studies looking at what happened following land reform in Zimbabwe. We have benefited enormously from collegial discussions and interactions with other researchers working in other parts of the country, including colleagues at the African Institute for Agrarian Studies, led by Sam Moyo, and Prosper Matondi and colleagues at the Centre for Rural Development and the Ruzivo Trust.

There is of course no single story of Zimbabwe's land reform. Some have dismissed our findings as being 'not representative' or 'exceptional'. In a strict statistical sense, case-studies are always such. However, the findings reported in this book very much echo those from other researchers in most areas outside the very highly capitalised farming areas of the Highveld. This was where the greatest disruption to commercial farming took place; where the largest concentration of high-level, politically-driven land grabbing happened and where the concentrations of election violence, particularly in 2008, were. Important research has taken place in these areas, notably a concentrated effort in Mazowe district. By contrast, the story of resettlement elsewhere in the country is less well documented, and certainly has not appeared in most media or academic representations of this period. We argue therefore that the Masvingo story told in this book is more generally representative of the

geographical majority of the country beyond the Highveld.

Our work has been guided by empirical findings from the ground. In many cases these have been surprising, and difficult to take on board. As researchers we were continually challenged. As a team we had many heated discussions about the meanings and implications of our data. Those of us exposed regularly to the international, especially British, media found it hard to match what we heard on the TV and radio and read in the newspapers with what we were finding on the ground. Those of us who lived in Harare were surprised to find the situation very different further away from the capital. And those of us who were resettled farmers ourselves were fascinated to find the diversity of experiences and outcomes across the different sites in the province.

We hope that you, as the reader of this book, will be equally engaged, intrigued and challenged by the story of Zimbabwe's land reform in Masvingo province.

Harare, Masvingo, Hippo Valley, Chikomedzi and Brighton

ACRONYMS & LOCAL TERMS



A1	Smallholder farming settlement (villagised or self-contained)
A2	Small-scale commercial farming settlement type
ACP	African Caribbean and Pacific countries
Agritex	Agricultural extension service, Ministry of Agriculture
AIAS	African Institute for Agrarian Studies, Harare
ANC	African National Congress of South Africa
ARDA	Agriculture and Rural Development Authority
AREX	Agricultural extension service, Ministry of Agriculture
ASPEF	Agricultural Sector Productivity Enhancement Facility
BIPPA	Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement
CADEC	Catholic Development Commission
CAMPFIRE	Communal Area Management Programme for Indigenous Resources
CBZ	Commercial Bank of Zimbabwe
CFU	Commercial Farmers Union
<i>Chimurenga</i>	Revolutionary struggle
CIO	Central Intelligence Organisation
CSC	Cold Store Company (formerly Commission)
CV	Coefficient of Variation
DA	District Administrator
DTZ	Development Trust of Zimbabwe
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
EU	European Union
FCTZ	Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe
FMD	Foot and Mouth Disease
FSI	FSI Holdings Ltd, agricultural company
FTLRP	Fast Track Land Reform Programme
GAPWUZ	General Agricultural Plantation Workers Union of Zimbabwe
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIS	Government Input Scheme
GMB	Grain Marketing Board
<i>Humwe</i>	Work party
<i>Hurudza</i>	Successful farmer
ICFU	Indigenous Commercial Farmers Union
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund

JAG	Justice for Agriculture
<i>Jambanja</i>	Period of chaos, confusion, violence
JOC	Joint Operations Command
<i>Kuronzera</i>	Loaning (of cattle)
<i>Lobola</i>	Bridewealth
<i>Maheu</i>	Non-alcoholic grain drink
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change (Tsvangirai and Mutambara factions)
<i>Miombo</i>	Woodland type dominated by <i>Julbernardia</i> and <i>Bracystegia</i> spp.
NFAZ	National Farmers Association of Zimbabwe
NGO	Non-government Organisation
<i>Nyimo</i>	Bambara nuts
Operation	Command agriculture/input support programme
Maguta	
Operation	Clean up the filth operation
Murambatsvina	
PSF	Productive Sector Facility
PLAAS	Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies, Cape Town
RBZ	Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe
<i>Sabhuku</i>	Village headman
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SD	Standard deviation
SG	Success Group
<i>Svikiro</i>	Spirit medium
SWAPO	South West African People's Organisation of Namibia
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
<i>Vlei</i>	Wetland
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZESA	Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority
ZFU	Zimbabwe Farmers Union
ZimVac	Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee
ZNLWA	Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association
ZRHDS	Zimbabwe Rural Household Dynamics Study
ZUM	Zimbabwe Unity Movement

CONTENTS



List of Figures, Tables & Boxes

ix

Preface & Acknowledgements

xi

Acronyms & Local Terms

xiv

1

**Livelihoods
& Land Reform
in Zimbabwe**



1

2

**Land Reform
in Masvingo Province**



32

3

**New Land,
New People,
New Livelihoods**



59

4

**Investing
in the Land**



77

5

The New Farmers



Agricultural
& Livestock Production

94






6

Labour



The New
Farm Workers

127

	7		
Real Markets		The Changing Political Economy of Agricultural Commodities	147
	8		
Livelihoods Beyond the Farm		Off-Farm Income & Migration	166
	9		
Territory, Authority & Social Dynamics			188
	10		
Livelihood Pathways & Economic Linkages		Emerging Impacts of Land Reform	213
	11		
Lessons from Zimbabwe's Land Reform			233
		References	257
		Index	279

1

Livelihoods & Land Reform in Zimbabwe

1.1 Land reform in Zimbabwe: myths and realities

From early 2000, headlines around the world reported the invasion of Zimbabwe's largely white-owned commercial farms in dramatic terms. This was 'Mugabe's land grab', with an 'unruly', 'violent mob' of war veterans looting and destroying property across the country. They were supported by Mugabe's 'thugs', and the political and security apparatus of the state. Stories of violence, displacement and loss were reported, alongside accusations of 'wanton environmental destruction'. Images of race were never far away, and the struggle between black land invaders and white commercial farmers was played out on TV screens internationally. Zimbabwe, it was claimed, had been turned from 'bread basket' to 'basket case'. Stark contrasts were presented between violent nationalism and sovereignty, and democratic freedom, the rule of law and development. Zimbabwe's subsequent economic collapse and widespread food insecurity were attributed to the 'chaotic' land reform, where property and human rights were violated and successful commercial farming had been transformed into underutilised plots run by 'political cronies' with no knowledge of or interest in farming.¹

But the story is far more complex than the generalisations of the media headlines.² This book looks at the realities behind the headlines, and tries to tackle some of the oft-repeated myths about Zimbabwe's land reform with a hard look at empirical data. Our aim is not to deny what has happened, including some appalling violations and abuses. However, there is an enormous amount of confusion, misinformation and misunderstanding about what happened to whom, where and with what consequences over the last decade, and a more nuanced story urgently needs to be told. In large part misconceptions repeatedly arise because

¹ See the many reports in the archive on www.zimbabwesituation.com from March 2000.

² There is a growing genre of Zimbabwe literature, mixing biography with popular political commentary, including for example Buckle (2001), Blair (2002), Harrison (2006), among many others, as well as a documentary feature film ('Mugabe and the White African') and an extraordinary array of material on YouTube, blogs and websites.

of a simple lack of solid, field-level data. This book aims to fill this gap by providing insights from 16 different sites and some 400 households, situated along a transect of contrasting agroecological conditions in Masvingo province.

In the last decade, there have been major changes in the rural landscape of Zimbabwe, with some radical reconfiguration of land, production, economy and livelihoods. But the implications of this are often not clear. It is too early to draw up a definitive balance sheet on Zimbabwe's land reform, but there have been benefits and opportunities as well as costs, challenges and pitfalls. Why is this assessment important? It is important for Zimbabwe, as land remains – as it always has been – a highly emotive and political issue. At Independence in 1980, Zimbabwe inherited a highly skewed ownership pattern, with around 42% of the country owned by some 6,000 large-scale farmers, most of whom were white (Palmer, 1990; Stoneman, 1988, 2000). This commercial agricultural sector dominated the formal agricultural economy, contributing 75% of total agricultural output and 96% of sales. Advanced technologies and effective management resulted in high yields, with maize for example averaging 4.2 tonnes per hectare. The commercial sector also employed a significant workforce, about a third of formal sector employment and around 250,000 people (Bratton, 1994a: 71). The liberation war of the 1970s was fought over land, and ZANU-PF, the nationalist ruling party since 1980,³ always emphasised the continued racialised pattern of land-ownership, especially at election time (Alexander, 2006). The land reforms since 2000 have been a focus of intense debate, reflecting highly divided opinions about the future of the country (Hammar et al., 2003). As Robin Palmer concluded in 1977: 'the most acute and difficult question confronting the first ... Government of ... Zimbabwe, whatever its ideological hue, will be that of land, bedevilled by its past use as a political and economic weapon by the whites, and by the consequent mythologies to which this has given rise. The problem will not be an easy one to resolve' (quoted in Palmer, 1990: 164).

For southern Africa more broadly, the experience of Zimbabwe has highlighted one potential path for countries unable or unwilling to deal with the unequal inheritance of apartheid or colonialism (Bond, 2000; Bond and Manyama, 2002). The spectre of land invasions destabilising an economy and the wider social and political system has sent shockwaves through the region (Lahiff and Cousins, 2001; Cousins, 2003; Goebel, 2005a). Equally, the alternatives to an agricultural sector reliant almost exclusively on large-scale commercial farms, and the potential of a more equitably distributed, small-scale production system have highlighted the possibility of alternative rural development options (Cousins, 2007).

The Zimbabwe case also offers some important insights into wider international discussions about agrarian futures, and the potential for redistributive land reform based (largely) on a smallholder model. Many thought that, with neoliberal, market-based policy prescriptions centred on the 'Washington consensus', radical and redistributive land reform

³ A 'unity' accord was signed between ZANU and ZAPU in 1987 following the Gukuruhundi massacres in Matabeleland (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zimbabwe_African_People's_Union).

was off the agenda (Lipton, 1993). So-called 'new wave' land reform, based on principles of willing-buyer and willing-seller land reform, was deemed acceptable as contributing to poverty reduction objectives (Deininger and Binswanger, 1999; Deininger, 1999; World Bank, 2003), but a land reform based on a major restructuring of the agrarian economy and patterns of ownership was just not expected. The Zimbabwe experience is in many respects unprecedented, and deserves special scrutiny for the broader lessons it reveals. For, as Michael Lipton (2009) points out, land reform is both unfinished business and alive and well, and remains a hot debate across the world (Borras et al., 2008; Akram-Lodhi et al., 2009).

The future role of agriculture in African development is also a much-debated topic in policy circles, as witnessed by the flurry of major reports on the subject in recent years (IAASTD, 2008; World Bank, 2008). Many foresee a 'new African green revolution' based on the flourishing of smallholder agriculture (Johnson et al., 2003),⁴ with land reform often seen as a critical precondition. Others envisage a process of 're-peasantisation' which fosters local economic growth based on locally-controlled production systems (van der Ploeg, 2009). Still others view the advocacy for small-scale agricultural solutions as naïve and populist, pointing to the competitive advantages of large-scale, 'modern', commercial agriculture in the context of globalisation (Collier, 2008) and the on-going patterns of de-agrarianisation and livelihood diversification across Africa (Bryceson and Jamal, 1997; Bryceson et al., 2000; Ellis, 2000).

These are debates which we return to throughout the book. Needless to say, many issues are not resolved by the lessons from Zimbabwe. However, the empirical material from Masvingo province does offer some important insights, charting a way forward which in many important respects challenges the myths generated by the stereotypical views presented in media and other commentaries.

1.2 A new agrarian structure

Today Zimbabwe has a radically altered agrarian structure. In 1980, over 15m ha was devoted to large-scale commercial farming, comprising around 6,000 farmers, nearly all of them white. This fell to around 12m ha by 1999, in part through a modest, but in many ways successful, land reform and resettlement programme (Table 1.2). Today, there are still 5m ha under large-scale farming, some of it in very large holdings (such as the 350,000 ha Nuanetsi ranch in Masvingo province). There are perhaps only 2-300 white-owned commercial farmers still operating, with most having been displaced, along with a substantial number of farm workers. Most land today is under small-scale farming, either as communal areas or resettlement. Estimates vary, but around 7m ha have been taken over through the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) since 2000. This book describes this process in detail, and the way land units of different sizes were created, based on two broad models (A1, small-scale farming, either in villagised arrangements or

⁴ <http://www.agra-alliance.org/>.