



## Concept Note

### **State, Smallholder farmers and Investments: Insights on the ‘New Dispensation’ in Zimbabwe.**

The major challenge faced post Fast Track Land Reform (FTLRP) in Zimbabwe has been how to finance agrarian production given the capital flight, the attendant international isolation and an expanded peasantry base (Moyo and Nyoni 2013). Literature shows massive declines in agricultural credit, structural shifts in the producer base and differentiated commodity fluctuations in terms of volume and value. Despite all this, most literature acknowledges the redistributive outcomes of the FTLRP. Following political developments which ushered in the ‘new administration’ on the 24<sup>th</sup> of November 2017 and subsequently through the harmonised elections held on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2018, a strong affirmation has been made regarding the irreversibility of the programmes and policies relating to the land reforms of the 2000s and that the principle of repossessing the land remain unchallengeable. However, the country finds itself in an untenable situation considering the economic aspirations of the New Dispensation which are largely geared towards reorienting economic growth through Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) while at the same time seeking to improve the fortunes of smallholder farmers. As stated elsewhere,

In the current quest to attract foreign investment by the new administration, it is important to be wary about how agricultural investments may interact with issues of land rights, power relations, social and economic entitlements and inequalities between large agribusiness and smallholders. Important policy considerations include mechanism by which the land tenure security of smallholders, particularly women farmers can be protected going forward. (Mazwi, Tekwa, Chambati & Mudimu 2018).

With full-scale liberalisation of the broader economic and agricultural sectors in Tanzania, Shivji (1987) warns that this can lead to concentration of prime land mainly driven by foreign corporations, land alienation, a rural to urban migration as well as the escalation of child labour

and prostitution. Moyo (2011;2016) and Patnaik (2011) further highlight that the liberalisation of the economic and agricultural sectors can also ultimately lead to massive urban and rural poverty as well as a reconfiguration of agrarian structures as has been shown in many African countries over the past 3 decades.

With this changed policy thrust of the new administration manifested through “investments” that have been reported of late in the production of cannabis, promotion of joint ventures between former commercial farmers, corporate bodies and small-scale farmers as well as the promotion of contract farming, a number of questions have arisen on the likely impact of these policies on land tenure and livelihoods of small-scale farmers. This calls for a rethink of the overall policy framework as a strategy of protecting smallholder farmers access to land while at the same time enhancing access to credit and stimulating agricultural productivity. It is in light of these concerns that the Zimbabwe Land and Agriculture Network (ZiLAN) seeks to conduct three policy dialogues in Mashonaland, Matabeleland and Manicaland with policy makers, land and agrarian CSO’s, rural farmers and researchers which must answer the following questions:

- What has been the scale and extent of large-scale land based “investments”, Joint Ventures and contract farming under the “New Dispensation”?
- How are large scale land-based investments and Joint Ventures governed?
- How are small-scale farmers involved/ not involved and why are they involved/ not involved in land acquisitions?
- What happens to the farmer after land acquisitions? Does the government find alternative land for the small-scale farmers?
- How do small-scale farmers resist/ coexist within large scale investments?
- What should be the guiding principle/framework for private investors in the agricultural sector?
- How can smallholder farmer’s access to credit be enhanced?
- What is the most suitable tenure and land administration system?

The three policy dialogues will be held in April in Bulawayo, Mutare and Harare with constituents drawn from the countryside.