

Social differentiation and
'accumulation from below' in
Msinga, KwaZulu-Natal

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Policy context

South Africa has a highly unequal distribution of agricultural land > hence land reform

BUT

Who should be the primary beneficiaries of redistributive land reform?

How can land redistribution address the structural dimensions of inequality and poverty ?

Supporting smallholders... but what is a 'smallholder'?

The literature

The numbers:

- 200 000 smallholders & medium-scale commercial farmers
- 2 million semi-subsistence households

(Aliber *et al* from Labour Force Surveys)

Definitions are inconsistent:

- Sell products for cash to supplement income, OR
- Market a surplus, OR
- Primary focus is production for the market



A class-analytic perspective

Petty commodity producers are small productive enterprises using family labour-power to reproduce themselves

They combine the class places of labour and capital (and these are often gendered)

Some enterprises begin to produce a regular surplus and to re-invest in production > *expanded* reproduction (= accumulation)

Others begin to sell their labour-power to survive, or to depend on others to survive

Processes of class differentiation are endemic within capitalism

In agrarian economies with substantial numbers of small farmers: rich, middle and poor peasants

But in labour reserve/ migrant labour economies, this typology is problematic

Both proletarianization and successful farming (ie agricultural petty commodity production) can occur, and these can be combined (eg 'worker-peasants')

A class-analytic typology of black farming in SA

- Supplementary food producers
- Allotment-holding wage workers
- Worker-peasants
- Petty commodity producers
- Small-scale capitalist farmers
- Capitalists whose main income is not from farming



Accumulation 'from above' or 'from below'?

Agri-BEE: racial identity of the farmer changes but agrarian structure is left intact = accumulation from above

Accumulation from below = much larger numbers of surplus-producing farmers emerge, who begin to compete with large scale commercial farmers

Policy implications



- ‘Accumulation from below’ and enhanced food security of the poor can be complementary to a degree
- But there are key trade-offs too: arable land and irrigation water are scarce resources
- PCP and small-scale capitalist farmers should be targeted for redistribution of high potential land
- ‘Win-win’ solutions hardest to achieve for farm labour, and may be tough in relation to gender equality too

Tugela Ferry Irrigation Scheme (‘Mtateni’)



Tugela Ferry Irrigation Scheme

- Constructed in early 20th century
- Total area = 837ha, in 7 different blocks (one not used)
- Supplied from weir on Tugela River by a canal 31 kms in length
- Gravity-fed but main canal leaking badly
- Blocks 4 and 7 use pumps to extract water from river
- Estimated 900 - 1000 producers
- Mean “bed” size = 0.11 ha
- Mean no. of beds/producer = 3.37 (0.4 ha, or 1 acre)

Tugela River



Canal-fed irrigation



A dry and densely populated landscape –
few fields other than irrigated plots



Early green maize



Hawkers and traders from Tugela Ferry buy and sell green maize from farmers



A range of other crops



Tomatoes



'Female Farmer of the Year', 2009



Knapsack sprayers are key items of equipment for tomatoes



Sweet potatoes



MAIN CROP TYPES:

- Maize: 90% (of farmers)
- Sweet potatoes: 73%
- Tomatoes: 64%
- Spinach: 50%
- Cabbages: 34%
- Beans: 38%
- Potatoes 28%
- Onions: 23%

Cabbages, spinach



Ploughing services



Hired labour used by most producers (R30/day or paid in kind)



Irrigation farming in Tugela Ferry

- Gendered : min of one female member engaged in farming in 92% of households (vs males = 24%)
- “Borrowing” or renting of beds: 42% borrow or rent between 1 & 9 beds (mean = 2.1)
- “Ownership” of beds acquired through allocations via traditional leaders or inheritance
- No. of crop types grown: mean = 4.4
- Ownership of agricultural assets (hoes etc): 60% own 1-5; 32% own 6 or >
- Ownership of knapsack sprayers: 37%

Production and profit: green maize & tomatoes

Crop	Area planted	Gross margin	Gross margin/ha
	Mean (Range)	Mean (Range)	Mean (Range)
Green maize (n=18)	1121 m ² (700 - 1888 m ²)	R1 211.00 (R210 - R2916)	R10 802/ha (R1 481 - R32 171/ha)
Tomatoes (n=10)	1083 m ² (180 - 1512 m ²)	R1 577.80 (R-1665 - R6563)	R14 568/ha (R-55 556 - R57 110/ha)

Income sources for irrigation farming households (n = 171)

Households with members who:	% of households
Are employed in permanent jobs	37 %
Are employed in temporary jobs	26 %
Are self-employed, employ others	5 %
Are self-employed, do not employ others	7 %
Receive an old age pension	48 %
Receive a child support grant	71 %
Receive remittances	15 %

Comparing households of smaller and larger cultivators

	1 - 5 beds (n= 150)	6 - 14 beds (n= 18)
Members with permanent jobs	0.54	0.67
Members self-employed, with employees	0.04	0.33
Members engaged in farming	1.29	1.5
Agricultural assets	3.84	6.76
Knapsack sprayers	0.34	0.83
Total assets	6.9	12.00
Cattle	1.42	5.44
Goats	7.30	16.22

Correlations: asset ownership and income source (Pearson's r)

	Beds cultivated	Permanent jobs	Self-employed with employees
Domestic goods	0.28	0.50	0.15
Motor vehicles	0.34	0.35	0.30
Agricultural tools & equipment	0.46	0.32	0.22
Knapsack sprayers	0.41	0.23	0.32
Total assets	0.43	0.46	0.26
Cattle	0.24	0.04	0.04

Income sources for 15 larger farmers (6 or more beds)

	Grants	Wages	Small enterprises	Remittances
6 cases	X			
4 cases	X	X		
2 cases	X	X	X	
1 case	X		X	
1 case	X	X		X
1 case	X			X
Total	15	7	3	2

Accumulators? Mrs Mbatha and her son Bheki

- 59 yr old woman + son cultivate 12 plots (3 + 9 “borrowed”)
- Husband receives a state pension. Bheki operates a wholesale shop in Tugela Ferry, and Mrs Mbatha works a till in shop. Another son works as a teacher at a local school
- The household owns a total of 20 durable goods/assets, including 3 motor vehicles and 9 agricultural assets (2 knapsack sprayers)
- 8 different crop types
- 10 cattle, 35 goats and 15 chickens

Accumulation from below in Tugela Ferry irrigation scheme: some questions

- (a) Does the class-analytic typology of small-scale agriculture work?
- (b) If not, what is the alternative?
- (c) Is accumulation from below taking place?
- (d) If not, why not?

Class-analytic typology?

- No reliable data thus far on levels of investment in agriculture and sources of capital
- Scale of agricultural production *is* an important variable
- Decline of wage employment and increase in grants means distinctions between 'supplementary food producers', 'allotment-holding wage workers' and 'worker-peasants' are perhaps less significant than in the past
- All households combine different income sources; all receive grants
- No farming households with *only* agriculture as their source of income (i.e. no PCP?)

Alternative typology

Labouring/farming poor (Fragmented classes of labour farming on a small-scale; combine employment, self-employment and cash transfers)	(a) Agriculture = < 50% of reproduction requirements of hh; > 50% from other sources (b) Agriculture = >50% of reproduction requirements of hh
Petty commodity producers	Able to reproduce themselves from farming alone (+ minor additions <10% of requirements?)
Small-scale capitalist farmers	Rely substantially on hired labour; begin to engage in expanded reproduction and capital accumulation
Capitalists whose main income is not from farming	Farm on a small-scale but their main source of income is another business

Is accumulation from below taking place in Tugela Ferry?

- Very little, if any; few larger scale operations (largest =14 beds i.e. 1.5 ha)
- *Factors facilitating accumulation?* Informal land rental market; low cost labour in plentiful supply; fertile soils; access to fresh produce markets
- *Factors constraining accumulation?* Water supply; undifferentiated fresh produce market; land rental market may constrain scale of operation; constraints on wage employment & small business as sources of capital

Conclusions

- Msinga District is marked by its history as a labour reserve (poor quality land, forced removals, high population densities, migrant labour system, unemployment, violence) > and in the present, acute dependence on state grants
- Accumulation from below in this context is highly constrained, even in irrigation farming
- Implications: accumulation from below on a significant scale will require redistribution of high quality land and resettlement of potential accumulators as a minimum requirement
- Necessary, maybe, but clearly not sufficient