



WORKING  
Paper **24**

# The changing nature of large-scale commercial farming & implications for agrarian reform

Evidence from Limpopo, Western  
Cape and Northern Cape

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## PLAAS Working Paper 24: The changing nature of large-scale commercial farming & implications for agrarian reform: Evidence from Limpopo, Western Cape and Northern Cape

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## ABSTRACT

The privileged position of white commercial farmers in South Africa came to an end by the early 1990s, when political and policy changes removed the certainty provided by controlled marketing, protective tariffs and weak legislation regulating resource use and labour relations on farms and transformed agriculture into a sector that is highly sensitive to events on world markets. Despite their dwindling numbers and disarticulation from political power commercial farmers represent a dominant group in the countryside, retaining a near monopoly of resources and considerable power. Yet, the dynamics of change in the sector are not properly understood or well-researched. This paper presents data from a recent survey of 141 commercial farmers in the Limpopo, Western and Northern Cape Provinces that shows that they consider input costs, climate, labour matters, uncertainty about government policies and producer prices as the major pressures bearing down upon them. The adoption of farming methods which are less labour-intensive and the extension of labour legislation and minimum wages to farm workers, together have led to the decline of on-farm employment. Declining profit margins have resulted in a 'shake-out' in which only the most competitive enterprises can survive, leading to increased concentration in agricultural landholding and production. These processes imply that new entrants to agriculture with limited capital face daunting challenges, which policy needs to address. The paper explores these wider implications.

**Keywords:** large-scale commercial farmers, change, uncertainty, sustainability, response to change, land reform beneficiaries



## ACRONYMS

AgriSA	Agriculture South Africa
CODESA	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
DBSA	Development Bank of South Africa
DEAT	Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism
DME	Department of Minerals and Energy
DWAF	Department of Water Affairs and Forestry
PV	Production Value
SAB	South African Breweries
TIPS	Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The foundation for South Africa's large-scale commercial farming sector was laid by government policy interventions between 1910 and 1980: first by legislation to segregate white and black farmers and legislation that would facilitate 'orderly marketing', then by interventions and direct subsidies that encouraged mechanisation and decreased their dependence on (black) workers and also protected them from overseas competition (Vink & Kirsten 2000). During the 1980s and early 1990s, shortly before their privileged position would come to an end, white commercial farmers still received financial support and subsidies to the value of R3 912 billion to purchase land, for debt consolidation; to purchase implements and livestock; to improve infrastructure; for emergency drought schemes; to convert marginal lands; etc. (Kirsten *et al* 2007:2). After the first democratic elections in 1994 and the deregulation of agricultural marketing in 1996 white farmers lost their privileged position when political and policy changes removed the certainty afforded by controlled marketing, protective tariffs and weak legislation regulating resource use and labour relations on farms, and transformed agriculture into a sector that is open and highly sensitive to events on world markets.

Large-scale commercial farmers face a multitude of pressures bearing down upon them:

- uncertainty about government policies and climate
- rising costs and decreasing prices
- growing levels of concentration in the food processing and retail industry
- the need to conserve natural resources.

Although their privileged position came to an end after 1990, they still represent a dominant group in the countryside who holds considerable institutional power and a significant amount of rural resources. Despite that, the dynamics of change in the sector are neither properly understood nor well-researched. This paper aims to give a better understanding of the life-worlds of South Africa's large-scale commercial farmers.

## 2. BACKGROUND

In a monograph commissioned by the Free Market Foundation, Vink and Kirsten (2000) describe three distinct phases of structural adjustment in agriculture, beginning with the period from the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910 up to World War II (1939), when several acts were promulgated that would lay the foundation for an agricultural sector that white farmers were to dominate for most of the twentieth century.

*... legislation such as the Land Bank Act of 1912, Land Act of 1913, Co-operative Societies Acts of 1922 and 1939, the Native Administration Act of 1927, the Land Act of 1936 and Marketing Act of 1937 set the scene for the almost total segregation of agriculture and for a comprehensive system of support measures to white farmers.*

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*Vink & Kirsten 2000.*

The second phase of the restructuring of agriculture (1945–1980) heralded the mechanisation of farming that increased the areas under field crops and labour substitution. It also brought tightened control over prices and moving produce in terms of the Marketing Act, and an increase in direct and indirect subsidies to white farmers. Vink *et al* (2002:2) describe South Africa's trade regime before liberalisation as:

*... characterised by numerous quantitative restrictions, a multitude of tariff lines, a wide dispersion of tariffs and various forms of protection such as formula, specific and ad valorem duties and surcharges. In agriculture, quantitative restrictions, specific duties, and a maze of price controls, import and export permits and other regulations in many cases eliminated any foreign competition.*

These discriminatory and price-distorting practices and policies could not be sustained and pressure started to mount to remove state support to agriculture and open up South Africa's markets to international competition by dismantling tariff barriers (Hall 2004:220) and reversing the policies of the 1960s and 1970s. By 1998 agricultural marketing had 'gone from a *laissez-faire* system to one of very rigid market controls and back to a system with fewer controls and less government intervention than in most countries of the world' (Van Schalkwyk, *et al* 2003:119). While agricultural markets were deregulated, the state increasingly regulated other aspects of the agricultural economy through labour and land reform legislation (Mather 2002:21). The reversal of these policies and the restructuring of the commercial farming sector through deregulation and liberalisation produced 'winners and losers' (Hall 2009:121), while removing government support produced a 'uniquely hostile' environment for new entrants (Hall 2004:220). White commercial farmers on the land face multiple challenges, according to Ortmann and Machethe (2003:47–62) some of the most 'critical problems and challenges' are:

- land redistribution
- uncertain property rights
- production risk
- restrictive labour policies
- under-investment in the rural economy
- competitive pressures
- low investor confidence in agriculture.

Centuries of dispossession resulted in skewed land ownership patterns, and this inequity has made land reform central to government policy to redress past injustices and transform ownership patterns (Hofstatter 2005:18). In line with Section 25 of the Constitution land policy makes provision for programmes for land redistribution, land restitution and tenure reform (Cousins 2004). South Africa has opted for a system of market-based land reform, with land purchase negotiations left to the market (Lahiff 2005:1). South Africa does not have a surplus of unused public land that can be redistributed to landless people; which underlines the challenge to the commercial farming sector to make a contribution (Nieuwoudt & Groenewald 2003:267). Since land reform commenced in the 1990s, the programme has played out in a heterogeneous manner across South Africa. Due to the late colonisation of the northernmost part of South Africa, large areas of land were only surveyed and allocated to white owners after the 1913 cut-off date for land claims. As a consequence, a huge proportion of the white-owned agricultural land in Limpopo is under claim (Lahiff *et al* 2008:6). Western Cape land reform focuses on tenure reform on municipal commonage, church land and Act 9 land<sup>1</sup> (Western Cape Government 2012); and share equity schemes on high-value fruit and wine farms. Northern Cape land reform entails the acquisition of land from commercial farmers to enlarge municipal commonage, predominantly to benefit inhabitants of the area's Act 9 lands (May & Lahiff 2007).

<sup>1</sup> Act 9 land refers to rural areas, as proclaimed by the *Rural Areas Act 9* (House of Representatives) of 1987, and is land used in common by the community and held in trust by the state. Legislation regarding this land was replaced by the *Transformation of Certain Rural Areas Act 94* of 1999, which prescribes the processes to be followed to create entities to hold commonage land in trust for rural inhabitants.

Though recent erratic weather patterns cannot be inconclusively linked to climate change, of late farmers had to battle more extreme weather events, e.g. heat waves, frost, drought and intense rainfall events. A lack of quality road, rail and communication infrastructure adds extra costs to agricultural production and increases farming risks. Whereas a private farm used to be an almost autonomous unit, nowadays natural resources such as water and minerals are public goods, and biodiversity and ecosystem services have to be conserved on behalf of others, often at a cost to landowners (DEAT 1998; DME 2002; DWAF 1998). As 'pricetakers' farmers are dictated to by contractual arrangements with buyers or processors. When their share of the price of processed products is considered, it is clear that they were relegated to a minor position on the value chain. One of their biggest concerns is market concentration, with fragmented groups of farmers having to deal with small numbers of powerful buyers who can dictate contractual arrangements because of their relative power (Kirsten 2009).

### Consequences of liberalisation, deregulation and democratisation

Large-scale commercial farmers may have been forced to adapt to radical changes, but Bernstein's studies of South African commercial agriculture (1996a, 1996b & 1997) show that it has not rendered commercial agriculture powerless: in the light of the importance of competition and efficiency in South Africa's economic policy, commercial agriculture 'stakes its place in the new South Africa on the claim of its 'efficiency' in a non-racial capitalism, while white farmers retain a *de facto*, if no longer *de jure*, near monopoly of resources and institutional and economic power in the countryside (Bernstein, 1997:22). This notion of a group that may have lost their privileged position and political power, but managed to almost hold a veto on land sales, is also explored by Lahiff (2007) and Fraser (2008). The compromise reached at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) negotiations and subsequent Constitution and White Paper on Land through the principle of 'willing buyer, willing seller', bestowed on landowners the power to withhold land from the land reform programme (Lahiff 2007:1583).

Mather & Greenberg (2003:33), who aimed to assess the impact on growers and industry of restructuring citrus exports, found a growing differentiation between the bigger growers who were able to take advantage of deregulation and those who were not, and that market power has shifted away from the single desk exporter and co-operative pack-houses to privately-owned, large citrus enterprises (*ibid*). Alistair Fraser's (2008:33) investigation into white farmers' dealings with land reform in Limpopo found that their refusal to sell their land for restitution purposes, even when market-related compensation was offered, was rooted in their 'strong emotional bond' to the land, and that their 'attachment to the land and sense of belonging closely bound up with their identities as farmers'. He also found that farmers who refused to sell their land believed South African agriculture would continue to survive only if they stayed on the land as 'in their view, Africans were inherently incapable of meeting the country's economic demands' (*ibid*).

After labour legislation was extended to agriculture in 1995 a survey was conducted among commercial farmers in KwaZulu-Natal to gauge their perceptions about the impact of labour legislation (Newman *et al* 1997). Respondents agreed that labour legislation was necessary, but wanted it to be 'less ambiguous, more flexible and less extensive'. Were minimum wages to be imposed, cash wages would be paid, but benefits would be charged for (Newman *et al* 1997). Following the introduction of a minimum wage in 2003, Conradie (2004) conducted interviews about labour and wage issues with wine and table grape farmers in the Rawsonville, Robertson and De Doorns in the Western Cape. She found that farmers were more likely to give their workers fewer benefits than retrench them as minimum wage determinations increase, and that increased mechanisation also raised labour intensity. In a subsequent paper in *Agrekon* Conradie (2007:192), focussing on the data for De Doorns, found that the most significant shift was 'upgrading' women living on the farm from seasonal to permanent employment.



### 3. METHODOLOGY

Based on a questionnaire survey conducted between October 2010 and August 2011 in three localities in Limpopo, Northern and Western Cape provinces, this study sought information about the structure of South Africa's commercial farming sector and the dynamics of sectoral change in relation to property rights, prices, value chains and agro-ecology. The survey also collected data on how commercial farmers understand the pressures bearing down upon them, and how they rank the pressures in terms of constraints and opportunities, and how they respond to the pressures.

The nature of the research questions dictated research methods that yielded descriptions *and* explanations, i.e. extensive and intensive methods (Sayer 1992). Extensive research was conducted by means of a questionnaire survey with 141 farmers in three research areas, while intensive research is underway by means of semi-structured interviews, aimed at finding 'causal explanations' (Sayer 1992:243) to questions. A total of 141 questionnaires (48 in Limpopo, 45 in Namaqualand and 48 in the Overberg) were completed between October 2010 and August 2011. Apart from some biographical questions and questions about agricultural production and prices, respondents were also asked to rank and rate the pressures bearing down upon them. The last part of the questionnaire was aimed at determining how they respond to these pressures.

The three research sites are farming areas surrounding the Limpopo towns of Tzaneen, Letsitele, Modjadiskloof, Mooketsi and Trichardtsdal; the mixed farming areas of the Overberg in the Western Cape; and Namaqualand in the north-western part of the Northern Cape. These areas were selected because of the way land reform is playing out in each and differences in the intensity of resource use and the value of agricultural production: from capital and water intensive, high-value export production in Limpopo to diversified rain-fed mixed farming in the Overberg, and extensive livestock farming in arid Namaqualand. In the Limpopo locality a significant proportion of commercial farmland is under claim for restitution, whereas land reform in the Overberg is piecemeal and consists of joint ventures between small numbers of black farmers and commercial farmers on municipal commonages and commonage land in Act 9 areas. Land reform in Namaqualand is characterised by land redistribution to poor and previously disadvantaged people under the municipal commonage programme.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Landholding

One of the most significant findings of the questionnaire survey is the heterogeneity within the group of respondents; with huge differences between the three sites, but also within each site with regards to enterprises engaged in, farm size and annual turnover.

Diversification of operations seems to be the rule, with 86% of all respondents engaged in the production of two or more commodities and one respondent producing as many as nine different products, each with its own local marketing and export requirements. A total of 19 of the 141 respondents are engaged in only one enterprise. The average farm size for the whole sample is 4 767 hectares, while the average age is 48 years, and respondents have on average been farming for 22 years. The average number of permanent workers is 38 (*Table 1*).

Table 1: Agricultural structure in three field sites

		Lowest	Highest	Average
Age (years)	All (n=141)	2	75	48
	Limpopo (n=48)	26	73	50
	Namaqualand (n=45)	31	75	49
	Overberg (n=48)	26	64	45
Time farming (years)	All (n=141)	2	58	22
	Limpopo (n=48)	4	58	23
	Namaqualand (n=45)	2	56	23
	Overberg (n=48)	2	43	21
Permanent workers	All (n=141)	0	600	38
	Limpopo (n=48)	5	600	100
	Namaqualand (n=45)	0	8	2
	Overberg (n=48)	3	29	9
Farm size (hectares)	All (n=141)	20	60 000	4 767
	Limpopo (n=48)	20	15 000	1 028
	Namaqualand (n=45)	200	60 000	12 074
	Overberg (n=48)	160	7 500	1 949

### Farming enterprises

Table 2 shows the different enterprises respondents are engaged in. The number of respondents engaged in each enterprise is indicated in brackets. In the Limpopo site more than half of the respondents (56%) are growing a range of citrus varieties, 40% is growing mangos and 31% avocados, while 27% grow vegetables and 46% keep cattle. Farmers in the Mooketsi area used to be the country's major tomato growers until irrigation water became limited on certain farms. A number of citrus and subtropical fruit growers have lately diversified their farming operations to include vegetables. Others saw an opportunity to supply fruit farmers with a fundamental input, namely young fruit trees, and requirements for more integrated production opened up an opportunity to supply insects for biological control of pests. Anecdotal evidence suggests that more farmers used to own forested land, especially at a time when tomato producers needed 'houtkissies' (wooden boxes) to send their produce to the market.

Table 2: Farming enterprises in which respondents engage

Limpopo (n=48)	Namaqualand (n=45)	Overberg (n=48)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citrus (27=56%)</li> <li>• Mangos (19=40%)</li> <li>• Avocados (15=31%)</li> <li>• Macadamias (8)</li> <li>• Litchis (8)</li> <li>• Guavas (5)</li> <li>• Bananas (4)</li> <li>• Papayas (1)</li> <li>• Vegetables (13=27%)</li> <li>• Beef cattle (22=46%)</li> <li>• Dairy (1)</li> <li>• Stud cattle (2)</li> <li>• Sheep (2)</li> <li>• Game (10)</li> <li>• Forestry (3)</li> <li>• Tree nurseries (2)</li> <li>• Prickly pears &amp; dragon fruit (1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sheep (45=100%)</li> <li>• Only sheep (16=36%)</li> <li>• Boer goats (19=42%)</li> <li>• Cattle (18=40%)</li> <li>• Game (3)</li> <li>• Grains &amp; legumes for small flour mills and fodder (18=40%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wheat (42=88%)</li> <li>• Barley (42=88%)</li> <li>• Canola (38=79%)</li> <li>• Oats (17=35%)</li> <li>• Lupines (13=27%)</li> <li>• Lucerne (42=88%)</li> <li>• Coriander (5)</li> <li>• Peas (2)</li> <li>• Beef cattle (22=46%)</li> <li>• Dairy cattle (20=42%)</li> <li>• Wool-bearing sheep (45=94%)</li> <li>• Ostriches (6)</li> <li>• Pigs (1)</li> </ul>

While 70%–80% of all citrus is exported, farmers in the Limpopo location also have access to local fresh produce markets in Johannesburg, Pretoria and Springs, and further away in Durban and Cape Town. Export markets also exist for avocado and macadamia nuts. A significant

amount of fresh fruit and vegetables are sold to hawkers. Opportunities to process lower grade fruits abound in the area.

On the other side of the country, in the arid and remote Namaqualand, location opportunities for diversification are limited. All the respondents rear mutton sheep and 40% of them also rear cattle. Those farming in the mountainous Kamiesberg and Hardeveld areas rear Boer goats (42% of all respondents) as well. Limited opportunities to grow small grains and legumes for bread flour and animal feed exist in the same areas. Many farmers own grazing land in both winter and summer rainfall areas and move their livestock between these areas. To sell their sheep, farmers have a choice of two abattoirs in the main town of the area.

Respondents in the Overberg location are known for their extremely diversified farming operations. As pioneers of no-till farming practices, crop rotation and diversification, they have managed to harvest grain under the most adverse conditions through two extremely dry cycles occurring during the past 20 years. The introduction of canola (used to make edible oil and as an ingredient of animal feeds) to the area about 15 years ago opened up new opportunities to improve farmers' incomes and crop rotations. Long crop rotations with five years of lucerne pasture between two cash crop phases enable them to keep large flocks of wool-bearing sheep and to exploit the fluctuating, but mostly lucrative, wool market. Although the deregulation of agricultural marketing lead to an increase in the relative power of milk buyers and processors and low milk prices for farmers, a significant number of small dairy farmers manage to survive because they produce their own animal feed.

### Turnover and income distribution

A production value (PV) as a measure of annual turnover was calculated (for produce sold or used on the farm) based on the formula:

$$PV = \text{amount of a product produced} \times \text{value (usually selling price)}$$

The average turnover for all respondents is R10.7 million. As shown in *Table 3* half of the respondents realise a turnover of R5 million or less. In Limpopo 40 of the 48 respondents produced a turnover of R1 million to R50 million. The turnover of 70% of Namaqualand respondents is less than R1 million. Only 12 of them produce a turnover of R1 million to R5 million. None of the Overberg respondents produce a turnover of less than R1 million, while 75% of them produced a turnover of between R5 million and R20 million.

Table 3: Distribution of turnover realised

Research site		All (n=141)	Limpopo (n=48)	Nam'land (n=45)	Overberg (n=48)
Lowest (in Rand)		50 000	362 000	50 000	1,37m*
Highest (in Rand)		131,3m	131,3m	3,8m	37,7m
Average (in Rand)		10,7m	20,2m	0,76m	10,5m
Turnover distribution	n<R1 million	37	4	33	0
	n>R1-5 million	34	14	12	8
	n>R5-20 million	51	15	0	36
	n>R20-50 million	15	11	0	4
	n>R50 million	4	4	0	0

\*m=million

### Investment beyond the farm gate

The results in *Table 4* show a significant number of respondents involved in agriculture beyond the farm gate. Half of all the respondents own shares in input companies, while just fewer than 50% hold shares in processing companies. Almost a quarter of the respondents hold shares in export companies. Less than 1% holds shares in retail companies.

Table 4: Shareholding in input, processing, export &amp; food retailing companies

	All (n=141)	Limpopo (n=48)	Nam'land (n=45)	Overberg (n=48)
No. of respondents holding shares in input companies	74 (52%)	29 (60%)	0	45 (94%)
No. of respondents holding shares in processing companies	67 (48%)	26 (54%)	24 (53%)	17 (35%)
No. of respondents holding shares in export companies	34 (24%)	14 (29%)	0	20 (42%)
No. of respondents holding shares in food retail companies	10 (0.07%)	0	10 (22%)	0

## Pressures bearing down on farmers

One reason for conducting this survey was to determine the pressures that bear down on large-scale farmers and the relative importance of those pressures. In this section of the questionnaire respondents were asked to select 7 pressures from a list of 26 pressures that put most pressure on their farming operation. They then ranked the selected pressures from 1 to 7, with 1 being the item that puts most pressure on their farming operation, 2 second most, etc. For this paper the number of times any pressure was chosen — regardless of ranking — was counted and expressed as a percentage of the total respondents. Only the top 20 pressures for all respondents are showed in *Table 5*.

Table 5: Pressures bearing down upon large-scale commercial farmers

	Pressures prioritised by farmers	All (n=141)	Limpopo (n=48)	Nam'land (n=45)	Overberg (n=48)
1	Production costs	72% (1)	79% (2)	62% (4)	73% (2)
2	Climate and weather	65% (2)	48% (4)	69% (3)	79% (1)
3	Labour issues	60% (3)	81% (1)	47% (7)	50% (5)
4	Uncertainty about government policy	50% (4)	44% (6)	51% (5)	56% (4)
5	Producer prices	50% (4)	29% (9)	49% (6)	70% (3)
6	Infrastructure (road, rail, communication)	45% (5)	37% (8)	80% (2)	20% (11)
7	Power of buyers of agricultural products	40% (6)	19% (11)	29% (10)	70% (3)
8	Land reform	39% (7)	44% (6)	44% (8)	29% (8)
9	Damage-causing animals	36% (8)	8%	95% (1)	8%
10	Exchange rate	30% (9)	56% (3)	0	33% (6)
11	Water	29% (10)	42% (7)	13% (14)	29% (8)
12	Crime and farm security	28% (11)	46% (5)	22% (12)	17% (13)
13	Sense that government is not listening to farmers	24% (12)	15% (13)	33% (9)	23% (10)
14	Government actions	23% (13)	17% (12)	20% (13)	31% (7)
15	Pests and diseases (of plants and animals)	23% (13)	29% (9)	13% (14)	25% (9)
16	Stock theft	16% (14)	15% (13)	13% (14)	19% (12)
17	Lack of useful and relevant information	13% (15)	4%	4%	29% (8)
18	Distance from consumers	11% (16)	17% (12)	11%	6%
19	Cost to secure family and property	10% (17)	27% (10)	2%	2%
20	Natural veld deterioration	8% (18)	0	27% (11)	0

The top five pressures bearing down upon all respondents in all locations (*Table 5*) are:

- production costs (72% of the respondents chose this as one of the 7 pressures bearing down upon them);
- climate and weather (65%);
- labour matters, such as the productivity of farm workers and labour legislation (60%);
- uncertainty about government's land and labour policies (50%); and
- the prices received for produce (50%).

The 'top five' are followed by:

- infrastructure (road and rail, communication, etc.)
- the relative power of buyers of agricultural products
- land reform
- damage-causing animals
- the exchange rate.

## Farmers' responses to pressures

As shown in *Tables 6–12*, most survey respondents have responded to these pressures by acquiring more land; investing capital to improve infrastructure and mechanise farming operations; changing farming practices; changing employment regimes; and finding other sources of income (including investing upstream and downstream from the farm gate and diversifying outside agriculture).

### Land transactions

Two-thirds of all respondents have bought more land in the past twenty years (see *Table 6*). Almost half of them bought the land adjacent to their farm, while about a third bought land in another part of their home province. Renting land is another popular method for respondents to 'enlarge' their farms, with almost 40% renting land adjacent to their present farm, while 16% rent land in another part of their home province. Almost one-fifth of all respondents had sold land, while smaller percentages have swapped land or are renting land to other farmers.

Table 6: How farmers responded to pressures in terms of land transactions

Response	All (%) n=141	Limpopo (%) n=48	Nam'land (%) n=45	Overberg (%) n=48
Bought land in past 20 years	67	69	55,6	77
Bought more land next to own farm	49	42	44	60
Bought land elsewhere in home province	35	33	22	19
Bought land in another province	5	10	4	0
Bought land in neighbouring country	3	8	0	0
Rent land next to own farm	37	29	40	42
Rent land elsewhere in home province	16	21	11	17
Rent land in another province	2	4	0	2
Rent land in neighbouring country	3	6	0	2
Sold land	18	23	24	8
Swapped land	7	8	0	12
Rent land to other farmers	7	10	7	4

### Other capital investments

Certain responses were specific to certain areas, as shown in *Table 7*. Respondents in the Overberg purchased bigger tractors in response to the power requirements of no-till planters, while respondents in Limpopo bought more tractors, probably because their orchards are now spread over more hectares and the rows between newly planted orchards are wide enough for the tractors to move there, which means some of the lugging work that used to be done by hand can now be done by tractor. Almost 90% of the respondents in Limpopo changed their irrigation infrastructure, specifically to use water more efficiently. Over 60% of respondents increased mechanisation, the biggest proportion of them in the Overberg and Limpopo.

Table 7: Capital investment

Response	All (%) n=141	Limpopo (%) n=48	Nam'land (%) n=45	Overberg (%) n=48
Bought more tractors	33	60	7	31
Bought tractors with a bigger capacity	47.5	23	27	92
Improved irrigation infrastructure	38	89,6	0	8
Increased mechanisation	64	75	31	83
Built on-farm grain storage facilities	17	0	18	33
Established a stud	24	8	29	35
Built a shed to establish a feed bank	34	8	47	48
Installed equipment to process own products	25	31	15,6	27

### Changes in farming practices

Many farming practices have changed in the past ten years. A number of those, e.g. changing to drip irrigation and engaging in minimum tillage practices and crop rotation, are aimed at lowering water, fuel and fertiliser costs. As shown in *Table 8*, more than 70% of respondents said they try to produce as much as possible, even if margins between income and costs are small, as 'it helps to have a lot of those small margins' (Personal communication, Vorster 2012). Organic fertiliser, such as cattle manure and compost are back on farmers' input lists as a way of 'putting life back into the soil' (*ibid*).

Table 8: Changes in farming practices

Response	All (%) n=141	Limpopo (%) n=48	Nam'land (%) n=45	Overberg (%) n=48
Changed to drip irrigation	24	64.6	0	0
Stopped growing wheat on marginal land	25	0	15.6	56
Establish legume pastures	42.6	0	38	89.6
Changed to a system of crop rotation	42.6	10	20	96
Changed to minimum tillage	42	10	22	92
Use less fertiliser	33	22	13	62.5
Use organic fertiliser	47	67	20	53
Have soil analysed scientifically	68	92	15.6	94
Changed to integrated/biological farming	32.6	46	6.7	44
Use agricultural chemicals more intensively	38	37.5	11	64.6
Try to produce as much as possible*	74	87.5	53	79
Only try to minimise production costs	57	58	51	62.5
Diversify	54	54	27	79
Specialise	27	44	9	27
Added a livestock enterprise	25.5	17	22	37.5
Grow own animal feed	25.5	12,5	47	89,6

Respondents in the Overberg site have made rather drastic changes to farming practices and the way they utilise land. More than 90% of them have switched to conservation agriculture practices such as crop rotation and minimum tillage. These practices lead to reduced amounts of synthetic fertiliser used by more than 60% of respondents. The benefits of conservation agriculture are well recorded, though it means that chemicals for weed control are used more intensively (*Table 8*). Significant proportions of the respondents in the Overberg and Namaqualand research sites indicated that they have built stores or sheds to either store grain until prices are higher or store fodder to use in dry periods when animal feed is scarce; 90% of Overberg respondents grow fodder for their animals.

### Income from other sources

From the data in *Table 9* it is clear that farmers no longer only produce and sell their produce in bulk through an agent; they also sell cereals in the form of animal feed (either as hay, straw or silage) or get involved in processing agricultural products. About a third of all respondents sell farm products directly to consumers. About one fifth of all respondents (40% in Overberg) indicated that they do contract work for other farmers, mostly planting and harvesting field crops and making hay or silage. Of all respondents, 18% said they speculate with livestock (more than 20% in Limpopo and Namaqualand). These respondents buy livestock to utilise veld when they had abundant rain and sell the fattened animals to cash buyers. Even though most of those surveyed are full time farmers, 56% said they've invested outside agriculture (63% of the respondents in Limpopo; 36% in Namaqualand and almost 70% in the Overberg).

**Table 9: Proportion of respondents earning money from sources other than primary agriculture**

Response	All (%) n=141	Limpopo (%) n=48	Nam'land (%) n=45	Overberg (%) n=48
Act as a consultant to other farmers	19	23	11	23
Speculate with livestock	18	21	22	12.5
Sell animal feed produced on the farm	20.6	0	15.6	46
Get involved in processing agricultural products	28	37.5	18	29
Get involved in transporting agricultural products	10.6	6	13	12.5
Process & sell own produce to consumers	29	46	22	19
Do contract work for other famers	20.6	16.5	4.4	39.6
Converted unused farm house to guest house or rent out	19	19	18	21
Invested outside agriculture	56	62.5	35.6	69

### Environmental responses and natural resources

Ecological considerations bear heavily on farmers in these areas. In a part of the survey results not discussed here, 50% of all respondents indicated that they experience pressure to farm more sustainably. In all research sites 69% of all respondents (see *Table 10*) indicated that they have tried to restore natural resources. Only 17% of respondents harvest products such as wood for braaiwood or to make charcoal, wild flowers or *dekriet* (thatching reed) from the veld. A third of all respondents changed their grazing method and almost half said they had divided their land into more camps. Also, 50% of all respondents (60% in Namaqualand and 73% in the Overberg) changed the number of livestock they keep.

Table 10: Environmental responses and natural resources

Response	All (%) n=141	Limpopo (%) n=48	Nam'land (%) n=45	Overberg (%) n=48
Try to restore natural veld	69	71	75.6	60
Harvest from the veld	17	8	20	23
Changed grazing method	31	14,6	51,5	29
Divided land into more camps	45	29	58	48
Changed livestock numbers	50	19	60	73
Change control of damage-causing animals	22	10.4	40	16.7

### Learning and expertise responses

In the past many agricultural extension officers and technicians and soil conservation officials were employed by various incarnations of the Department of Agriculture in order to give advice to farmers and see to it that government conservation policy was implemented. These days the focus of extension services has shifted to emerging farmers. Commercial farmers now pay for advice, either directly by using the services of experts or consultants, or indirectly by consulting the agronomists and soil scientists of agrochemical companies from whom they buy seed, fertiliser and other agrochemicals. Other important institutions for learning are localised, but include specialised citrus (Limpopo) and grain (Overberg) study groups, where interested farmers can learn from experts and other farmers. Due to the partial withdrawal of the state from research and extension services as well as a need to verify the claims made by companies selling agricultural inputs, 84% of all respondents said they are doing their own experiments, testing different cultivars or fertilisers (see *Table 11*).

Table 11: Learning and expertise responses

Response	All (%) n=141	Limpopo (%) n=48	Nam'land (%) n=45	Overberg (%) n=48
Use outside experts or consultants	82	98	53	94
Joined a study group	53	85	11	69
Do own experiments on farm	84	90	76	85
Do research on the internet	57	71	22	77
Visit other countries to learn from farmers there	28	33	4	44
Regularly attend conferences and farmers' days	85	94	78	83
Attend courses on biological/integrated farming	39	52	18	46
Attend courses on compost-making	29	56	0	29
Read books and magazine articles about biological farming	73	56	27	71
Visit farmers that already farm along integrated or biological principles	46	56	15.6	64.6

### Farm workers and labour issues

Survey results relating to labour issues follow the general trends in the country (Simbi & Aliber 2000:2), with 43% of all respondents indicating that they employ fewer permanent workers than ten years ago (see *Table 12*). While many workers were probably retrenched, some respondents said that they do not replace workers that die, retire or resign. More than half (54%) of the respondents in all areas said they now employ more temporary or seasonal workers, mostly to pick fruit and vegetables in the Limpopo site and to clear stones from grain fields in the Overberg and Namaqualand.



Tabel 12: Farm workers and labour issues

Response	All (%) n=141	Limpopo (%) n=48	Nam'land (%) n=45	Overberg (%) n=48
Employ more permanent workers	16	14.6	11	23
Decrease number of permanent workers	42.6	56	35.6	35
Employ more seasonal/temporary workers	54	69	44	48
Employ wives of permanent workers	51	71	20	60
Train workers better	80	92	58	89.6
Build new/renovate old houses	43	42	31	56
Pay the minimum wage	83	94	71	83
Employ contractors e.g fruit tree pruners, sheep shearers, silage makers, fencers	65	67	55.6	73

Only 16% of all respondents (15% in Limpopo, 11% in Namaqualand and 23% in the Overberg) said that they now employ more permanent workers. Most respondents (83%) pay the minimum wage, while the proportion of respondents in Namaqualand paying the minimum wage is lower than the other areas (bear in mind nine respondents do not employ any workers). The question, 'Do you pay the minimum wage?' caused some misunderstanding, especially with respondents who completed the questionnaire on their own, who took it quite literally and said 'no, we pay much more'.

## 5. THE EFFECTS OF CHANGE

After the questionnaire survey, semi-structured interviews were conducted with fourteen farmers — only in the Limpopo location — to find out what the biggest changes were since 1994 and how farmers reacted to it. Farmers interviewed cited the deregulation of agricultural marketing and the introduction of labour legislation as the biggest changes experienced since 1994. They did not seem too perturbed by restitution claims on their land, but were quite outspoken in their criticism of the restitution process and the way land is being used. Their responses and the implications for new entrants to agriculture will be dealt with in terms of deregulation, settling new farmers and willingness to mentor new farmers.

### Deregulation

Most farmers that were interviewed said the deregulation of agricultural marketing was one of the biggest changes in agriculture since 1994, and although they all of a sudden had to negotiate with foreign buyers to sell their produce and adapt to a range of quality standards, they now say they welcomed these changes. The changes gave them control over their produce and they no longer had to hand over all the responsibility for marketing to outspan bureaucrats who became very powerful over the years. It meant more work for them, and they needed to learn to produce and market their produce, but soon realised how lucrative the export market was and lured their highly educated children and their spouses from their city jobs to help them create farm businesses with specialised production and marketing positions.

*The extent of protection for farmers changed. The notion of one for all and all for one had changed completely. We were in a regulated single channel marketing system and we had to stand together, whether we wanted or not. It was very indoctrinating — just like the politics of the time. Farmers did not think a lot, and if you stepped out of line you were called to order.*

Farmer RvB.

*With single channel exporting we did not have a say in the marketing of our citrus. We gave it to them and they did what they thought were best. Now the world is open to us and we can go where we want to and export our own citrus.*

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Farmer SL.

*Outspan officials became too important. The tail started to wag the dog. Even though citrus producers became more quality conscious everybody got the same price for their product.*

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Farmer KA.

Also, where farmers were mere producers of citrus fruit in the past, they now grow a number of different varieties, know the preference of the different markets for each of the different varieties and words like 'quality' and 'consumer preference' regularly cropped up in interviews.

*It is a quality match. You know what the agent wants and just conform. The specifications of the agent in Hong Kong differ from that of the agent in Dubai. They do not want big fruit in the Middle East. The Far East and Hong Kong want beautiful, clean fruit. Singapore takes smaller fruit. Vietnam, Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, China ... are difficult, discerning markets and extremely quality conscious. Penalties for bad fruit are very severe there.*

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Farmer RvB.

*We sell our citrus in a shop that supplies the Japanese emperor ... they demand fruit with so much sugar, a smooth skin and it has to be flat.*

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Farmer SL.

With deregulation and liberalisation, South African farmers were literally thrown in at the deep end. Some drowned after a season or two, while others adapted and prospered. The biggest impacts of citrus market deregulation was a 'growing differentiation' between the bigger growers who were able to take advantage of deregulation and those who were not, and market power shifting away from the single desk exporter and co-operative pack-houses to privately-owned, large citrus enterprises (Mather & Greenberg 2003:411).

The impacts of the deregulation of the citrus industry as described by Mather and Greenberg (2003:405, 408) are playing themselves out in the Limpopo research area: big farmers leave the co-ops to establish their own pack-houses and benefit from the ability to pack for a wider variety of markets, while co-ops struggle because they lose the citrus volumes delivered by the big farmers. The deterioration of co-ops has implications for new black entrants. In the past all citrus farmers used to pack at the Letsitele Citrus Co-op, but all the bigger farmers have left and established their own pack-houses. The co-op now has only seven members, including two black members, the Mabunda and Mariveni farming co-operatives. While the Letsitele Citrus Co-op was recently renovated with a government grant aimed at improving infrastructure for new black citrus farmers, the chairman said they were concerned about the future of the co-op as white commercial farmers were leaving the co-op faster than new black farmers were joining.

## Settling new black farmers

During interviews white commercial farmers were asked what the countryside should look like in future, where the opportunities for new black farmers were to be found and what it would take to get land reform beneficiaries making a living from the land. While most of them said it

would be very difficult to begin fruit farming on a commercial basis, some of them suggested that black people were not suited to intensive fruit or vegetable farming:

*How easy is it for a black farmer to get going? He won't, unless he gets a lot of support from government. He must get someone to help him. Maybe it will be easier if he can begin with cattle or sheep, not the high-input things ... no, he won't make it. Their nature is to be stock farmers ... they don't want to do the intensive stuff that you have to tend to every day. If you visit your cattle once a week, it's fine.*

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Farmer LC.

*Most of them are not really interested in the way we farm. They are survivalist and subsistence farmers.*

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Farmer KA.

While large-scale commercial farmers that were questioned about the prospects for new black farmers believe that it is important to establish black commercial farmers, they expressed pessimism about establishing anyone as a new citrus farmer under the present circumstances; most of them believed that new black farmers will need commercial farmers as mentors.

*It's not so easy to begin here. I would not like to begin. I was lucky. It would be very difficult ... they would need expertise. What should happen to get them on the land and stay on land are partnerships with existing farmers.*

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Farmer RD.

*Honestly, I won't make it in the present economic climate ... Even with my experience I would not want to start farming without a lot of support from financial institutions. For a small operation like mine you will need at least R10 million ... for settlement and to carry you over to the next year. Prospective black farmers ... and young white guys ... should go to college and then farm with a commercial farmer.*

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Farmer MW.

*To start farming from scratch will take a lot of luck and a lot of guts. If you don't get a kick-start it will be difficult.*

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Farmer KA.

In most parts of South Africa agricultural production is often a struggle against poor and shallow soil and adverse weather conditions, and farmers receive very little support, especially new and poor entrants. Even if different agrarian structures and practices were implemented, little — if any — research is being done on suitable alternative practices, while the range of experts on whom commercial farmers came to rely are simply not available for small farmers. Furthermore, it seems almost impossible to recreate the efficient marketing and input supply infrastructure available to large-scale farmers for new small farmers or to serve them as well.

Using land acquired through land reform processes remains an issue of contestation, there is no consensus and not enough debate about what the future countryside should look like. While Walker (2007:147) questions how much really can be expected of agriculture considering the difficulties the sector experiences, Hall (2009:3) agrees that agriculture alone cannot be expected to solve the problem of rural poverty, yet it has a role to play. 'Land reform, for what, how and for whom?' are questions that various organisations and researchers have asked (e.g.

Ntsebeza & Hall 2007; Walker 2007:132-151; Hall 2009:12-13). Some, like organised agriculture headed by AgriSA (2008) and the Centre for Enterprise and Development (2005) have decided a deracialised version of the commercial farming model should be pursued and promote it actively. Cousins (2007:227-228) is of the opinion that it is partly because of *their* lobbying that South Africa's policymakers are not considering a 'radical restructuring of agrarian relations'.

Fraser's (2008:31-32) study about the refusal of white farmers in Levubu to sell their land for restitution purposes also found that it reflected a 'particular imaginary' about African farming styles; he noted white farmers' 'story of inadequate African agriculture' and the notion that African farming practices, 'were less commercially successful' than the white farmers'. Compounding these problems and the imaginary of African agriculture is the history of black dispossession and black detachment from the land. In a recent edition of the *Financial Mail* National Planning Commissioner Mohammad Karaan said that detaching African people from the land was 'Apartheid's biggest crime'.

*Now Africans can't farm profitably, but it shouldn't be a surprise — they have lost 100 years of farming tradition.*

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Sherry 2012:39.

### Acting as mentors

From their responses to questions about mentoring new black farmers one can conclude that large-scale commercial farmers envisage a future where they are still on the farm, helping an emerging farmer who farms nearby, in a way contributing to the Centre for Development and Enterprise's 2005 vision of a 'deracialised countryside'. Most farmers interviewed think commercial farmers now on the land are the best candidates to act as mentors for new black farmers. Most of them seemed rather keen to get involved as mentors, although opinions over the depth of their involvement and remuneration for mentors varied.

*I would not mind acting as a mentor for a new black farmer. If it does not take too much of my time, I'd do it for free. It would be good if we can all be members of the same farmers' association.*

---

Farmer MW.

*Where you can, you help your neighbour, but I'm not going to help emerging farmers if it means I am going to neglect my own farm. It's no good to help emerging farmers but you go out of business.*

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Farmer PR.

Whereas three farmers said commercial farmers should offer their help for free or a nominal amount, others said they should be remunerated. One of the latter group said that a mentor's remuneration should be linked to the performance of the new venture.

*If mentors are paid, it should be a nominal amount. A mentor should be in it for the goodwill, otherwise you attract the wrong people.*

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Farmer RD.

*Mentors should not receive any remuneration. We should consider it our contribution to the development of the previously disadvantaged.*

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Farmer LC.

*The best mentors are farmers who know the industry. They have years' experience and should be remunerated. It should be linked to performance. If the farm fares well, so should the mentor.*

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*Farmer KA.*

*If I have to mentor someone, he should live nearby. I don't want to get rich out of mentorship, but I would not want to spend too much time away from my farm. To mentor someone that lives 100 km away can be very expensive.*

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*Farmer BP.*

The fact that most farming knowledge now resides with commercial farmers may explain the prominence of the mentoring model in government thinking about supporting new farmers. Large-scale commercial farmers' willingness to help new farmers could be out of self-interest, either to justify their presence in the countryside or gain some leverage with government, to continue their style of farming or as a way to strengthen their 'group', whose numbers have been dwindling for years now.

## 6. CONCLUSION

When the winds of change began to blow across the *platteland*<sup>2</sup> in the late 1980s, some commercial farmers commanded the natural resources, capital and know-how to weather the challenges presented by the loss of state support and political influence, while others had very little choice but to sell their land and leave agriculture. The shake-out continues. Since fieldwork for this study commenced in October 2010, at least three respondents in the Namaqualand research site have either sold part of their land or rented their land out and found off-farm employment, while three of the smaller citrus farmers in the Limpopo research site have sold their land to bigger farmers. For these farmers, the challenges posed by an on-going drought have become too large, or, alternatively, the margins between their farm income and their costs have become too small and spread over too few hectares or too few boxes of fruit. The shake-out suggests a number of questions:

- Where is the tipping point for each farmer?
- What are the factors determining farming success?
- Is it technological prowess, the ability to adapt to change, or is it a specific farming enterprise or niche market?
- Can a 'formula' for success be developed based on these factors?
- What are the implications for policy formulation and new entrants into agriculture?

Most of the 141 respondents that took part in the survey were at least the second generation on that land, which might imply that most of them started their farming careers from a relatively secure base, i.e. without a mortgage on the land, or perhaps a small, manageable mortgage; with access to implements required to work the land, production finance and farming knowledge, links to markets, local institutions and other beneficial relationships. Data from the field indicates that most respondents who are still on the land have actively responded to the pressures bearing down on them. In most instances they have bought more land and invested other capital inputs to produce a bigger income, while some have introduced cost-saving irrigation infrastructure and grain growing practices or diversified into more lucrative niche farming enterprises. A considerable number of respondents have invested outside agriculture,

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<sup>2</sup> This phrase is taken from De Klerk M (1986) 'The winds of change on the Platteland: The need to reassess the Land Acts', paper presented to the Agricultural Economics Association of Southern Africa.

but also in agricultural companies upstream and downstream from the farm gate. Despite starting off from a secure base and having been able to respond on different fronts, some of them will be unable to prosper in the long run.

Even though this does not bode well for settling new entrants with limited capital, knowledge of farming and access to markets, opportunities that can be exploited do exist for farmers with limited means. Whereas quality standards for fresh fruit and vegetables are often so high that it excludes most poor and small farmers, vegetable farmers in the Limpopo research site indicated that the municipal markets for third and fourth grade vegetables can be quite lucrative. Furthermore, 13 of the 48 respondents in Limpopo jointly earned about R17 million through informal sales to 'bakkiemanne', mostly men and women from the communal areas, Mozambique or Botswana buying bakkie-loads of fruit and vegetables that did not make the grade for export or the local first-grade markets to sell to hawkers or at their own stalls at the side of the road. This clearly demonstrates that there is a demand for low-grade fruit and vegetables, which could be met by small-scale growers. A further R16 million is earned by three respondents from the sale of live chickens. Selling live chickens make expensive slaughtering, cooling and packaging facilities unnecessary, but respondents said that feed and veterinarian costs are quite expensive. Even so, this presents another opportunity for farmers who do not have access to much land. The requirements of agricultural processors, supermarkets and importing agents have necessitated agricultural production that resembles industrial manufacturing processes (Weis 2010; Pollan 2006). However, data from Limpopo, Namaqualand and the Overberg suggest that some large-scale commercial farmers have begun to re-introduce traditional farming methods, e.g. using manure in orchards and fields, mulching and conserving crop residue to conserve moisture, as well as crop rotation and the reviving traditional grazing methods, such as livestock mobility. The costs associated with these methods are often lower and more in harmony with natural processes.

Several researchers have commented on the poor state of government extension and support services and the fact that most of the agricultural and farming knowledge now resides with commercial farmers (Cousins 2012; Greenberg 2010). This is probably why government has begun to recruit commercial farmers into mentorship and strategic partnership agreements with new farmers. If government is prepared to draw commercial farmers into the extension gap, it is probably also time to revisit the institutions and interventions that worked for white farmers in the past. Greenberg (2010:xii) believes there is much to learn from the history of establishing white commercial agriculture, even though it took place at a very slow pace and 'significant, on-going state support' was essential.

Other interventions that worked in the past, but are now lacking and hampering efforts to settle new farmers, are the provision of road, rail and communication infrastructure in farming districts. Also, white farmers managed to survive in low-income farming areas, not only because of agricultural subsidies, but also because the services of public schools, hospitals and transport were supplied at low fees. The large-scale commercial farmers of today benefitted from co-operative marketing in the past, and although it is not as controlled as then, voluntary buyers' groups and other informal agreements and arrangements, such as pooling produce or sharing shipping space, all help to keep costs down.

Salvation should not be sought in massive 'projects' sponsored by government, unless it is for irrigation infrastructure or boreholes, but rather in targeted support for small local projects. Examples of small wheat and maize mills, who serve only customers in their immediate environments, thus making huge distribution networks unnecessary, do exist (Personal communication, Marais 2010) and suggest that real 'alternative' market opportunities exist, even in sectors where ownership and power is highly concentrated, as in the grain milling sector. Another example from the beer industry suggests that although numerous micro-

breweries will never pose a serious threat to beer giant SAB-Miller they have managed to carve out a niche for themselves (Bartlett 2005; Theunissen 2012; Kotzé 2012).

Opportunities also abound in other sectors. Data from the SA Milk Producers' Organisation shows that there are only about 0.2 cows per square kilometre in Limpopo and that the province produces only 1% of the country's fresh milk. A woman on a plot near the town of Louis Trichardt/Makhado (not a farmer's daughter or wife) milks a couple of cows and grows vegetables which she sells as a 'package', mostly to black townspeople who have a preference for unpasteurised milk. She's now looking for someone to supply eggs to add to the 'package' (Personal communication 2012). Although this would not help hundreds of smallholders, it is the kind of localised solution that could be sought out and supported.

New entrants to agriculture will not succeed if they try to follow all the practices of large-scale commercial farmers. Survey data shows that the most successful farmers in the Namaqualand research site are those with access to several thousands of hectares of grazing land in different rainfall zones and who are able to move livestock to the most suitable veld. Adding more land to the existing commonage of the Act 9 areas could help small farmers in those areas to also reap the benefits of transhumance. During the survey almost all the commercial farmer respondents in the Namaqualand site named damage-causing animals (e.g. jackal, lynx and leopard) as the biggest pressure bearing down on their livestock farming operations. Whereas the Fencing Act of 1912 and various amendments since, and subsidies for fencing enabled commercial farmers to install fences on their farm borders and divide their farms into camps to make rotational grazing possible (Cupido & Salomon 2012), the extensive livestock farming practices that developed as a result of these interventions exacerbated the problems with predators. Over the years, rangeland ecologists at the Agricultural Research Council and academics from local universities (Samuels *et al* 2012; Cupido & Salomon 2012; Vetter 2012) have been promoting the return of 'veewagters' (herders or shepherds) to protect livestock from predators, manage grazing in the veld, make expensive fencing unnecessary and to create employment.

Crop rotation systems that were developed by commercial farmers in the Overberg research site and tested by crop and soil scientists of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture and Agricultural Research Council make it possible for these farmers to add highly priced leguminous crops such as coriander, lentils and peas to the rotations (Genis 2012:31-32). Even though there is a demand for dry coriander, lentils and peas in South Africa, most of it is imported at this stage (*ibid*), which points to another possible opportunity. Some individuals from the communal areas of Slangrivier and Suurbraak are already involved in partnerships with neighbouring commercial farmers to grow these and other grain crops (Personal communication, Uys 2012).

To summarise, several opportunities for new entrants with limited means exist in South African agriculture, but the reason very few people recognise and exploit them is probably that they present such a departure from the present models of large-scale commercial farming and thinking about marketing and consumer preferences and demand. New farmers, who get very little support, are also expected to show success in a very short period of time, although the commercial farming sector was slow to develop, even with on-going state support.

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