

FOOD SECURITY IN A DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA¹

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Food Security: Concepts and Issues

The term 'food security', although interpreted in many ways, is defined here as *access by all people at all times to enough food for an active healthy life*. Its essential elements are the availability of food and *the ability to acquire it*. Food insecurity, in turn, is the lack of access to enough food. There are two kinds of food insecurity: chronic and transitory. Chronic food insecurity is a continuously inadequate diet caused by the inability to acquire food. It affects households that persistently lack the ability to buy enough food or to produce their own. Transitory food insecurity is a temporary decline in a household's access to enough food. It results from instability in food prices, food production, or household incomes - and in its worst form it produces famine (World Bank, 1986:1, emphases added).

The definitions and concepts quoted are sufficiently widely shared to establish a starting point. They reflect the impact on thinking about food security of the seminal work of AK Sen over the last 20 years, including his book on famines (1981) and the magisterial synthesis of Drèze and Sen (1989). The latter connects food security with creating adequate and secure entitlements as the core concern of development strategy, which requires

wide-ranging public support in domains such as employment provision, income redistribution, health care, education, and social assistance in order to remove destitution without waiting for a transformation in the level of general affluence. Here success may have to be based on a discriminating use of national resources, the efficiency of public services, a redistributive bias in their delivery. This may be called the strategy of 'support-led security' (Drèze and Sen, 1989:183).

Evidently, this conception of development is not common to all those who claim to share Sen's definition of food insecurity and his concern to overcome it. As Mackintosh (1990) points out, the World Bank's (1986) statement that food insecurity may result 'from a lack of purchasing power on the part of nations and households' is a tautology: poverty causes hunger. She emphasises that this is 'not Sen's central point'; rather he investigated what causes poverty and con-

cluded that market-driven economic growth typically increases insecurity and hunger for many people, identifiable by social class and gender. This, of course, contests the World Bank's 'rigid assumption that the liberalisation and extension of the scope of markets is always and everywhere the route to both efficient use of resources and growth', and to eradicating poverty (Mackintosh, 1990:45) - at best, the promise of what Drèze and Sen call 'growth-mediated security'.

Without engaging the range and sophistication of Sen's work, and the debates it has generated (Patnaik, 1991; Gasper, 1993; Nolan, 1993; Sen, 1993), some key points of reference for this paper can be outlined. First, *national food security* is understood as availability of sufficient food at an aggregate level, supplied from domestic production and/or imports. In macro-economic terms, any structural reliance on food imports requires a commensurate capacity to import, in turn determined by export performance (which provides the international 'purchasing power' of countries). Insufficient domestic production combined with constrained import capacity (weaknesses in balance of trade and balance of payments, exacerbated by foreign debt repayments), leads to dependence on food aid and vulnerability to its potential use as a political weapon by donors (Raikes, 1988; Crow, 1990; Friedmann, 1990).

Food availability decline (FAD) at the national (or sub-national, regional) level was long seen (going back to Malthus) as the principal cause of hunger and, at its most extreme, starvation. Sen complemented (rather than rejecting in all cases) the FAD model with the analysis of *food entitlement decline* (FED). He showed (1981) that in many instances of famine, starvation occurred not because of FAD or absolute shortage of food staples at the national level, but because of FED: the sharp reduction (or elimination) of access to food by particular social groups. The concept of food entitlements (and their failures) extends beyond the dramatic situation of famine. It encompasses the 'regular, persistent deprivation' (Drèze and Sen, 1989:258) experienced as a daily reality by impoverished classes, even in circumstances of rapid economic growth. Indeed such persistent deprivation can be seen as the *consequence* of particular patterns of growth and their effects for the conditions and distribution of livelihood opportunities, assets and income.

'Entitlement' refers to individuals' and households' command over 'alternative bundles of commodities' (Drèze and Sen, 1989:9), of which food is crucial to survival and well-being. Entitlements derive from 'endowments' (assets, including labour power), and the conditions of their exchange with food (own production of food, income from other self-employment, and/or sale of labour power). Social relations of property, production and exchange (specific market processes) shape both the distribution of endowments and how (or whether) they are realised as entitlements. Entitlements can also derive from informal (eg kinship)

and formal (public) social security, that provides the basic food needs of those otherwise lacking (sufficient) private entitlements.

Entitlement failures are manifested in the food insecurity of those who lose - or who never had - sufficient assets, access to regular (and adequately paid) employment, and access to sources and levels of adequate social provisioning (through informal or formal social security). Sen's conception of development proposes the *protection* (or restoration) of the entitlements of the most vulnerable and insecure groups as an immediate amelioration measure, and the *promotion* of adequate and secure entitlements for all as the strategic objective.

The relevance of this to South Africa at the end of apartheid is obvious. The extreme inequalities in the distribution of endowments and entitlements, generated by the long history of white domination, were intensified for poorer groups as the post-war boom gave way to an increasingly generalised and deep recession from the 1970s (Gelb, 1991), one index of which is massive structural unemployment. On one hand, South Africa is virtually self-sufficient in the production of major foods (red meat and vegetable oils being the only important exceptions); on the other hand, at least 53% of the black population subsist below the official poverty line. Many of them must be subject to chronic food insecurity ('persistently lack(ing) the ability to buy enough food or to produce their own'), above all in large areas of the bantustans: 'we can say with a great deal of confidence that any household without much land, without a wage or remitted income and without social welfare is probably in major problems most of the time' (CRDRD, 1993:2).

Before reviewing the assessments and prescriptions concerning food security of a number of bodies of the apartheid era, it is useful to note the method of analysis of food commodity chains of the French *filières vivrières* approach (Bernstein, 1992). Put simply, this investigates all the activities and exchanges involving food staples in their journey from farmer's field to consumer's plate. First, in relation to the farm and upstream of it (the conditions of access to land, labour, inputs, finance etc), it raises questions of what is produced, how (labour process, technology), by whom, in what quantities (productivity of land, labour, and other 'factors'), and with what effects (for the environment, for farm incomes, for aggregate food supply and food prices). Second, downstream of farming, *filière* analysis raises questions of how food is marketed, processed and distributed, and who controls these activities with what effects. An important practical issue here is price formation along a food commodity chain, the mark-up of prices by various agents in the chain (and their rates of profit) - or 'marketing margins' - and their impact on the prices paid by food consumers.

Of course, conventional economics is also (indeed obsessively) preoccupied with price formation, its proper determination by market forces (demand and

supply) and its improper 'distortion', especially by government market regulation and intervention, and also by oligopolistic concentration and collusion in market sharing and/or price fixing. In South Africa, the concern of economists with 'distortions' centres above all on the role of government in both domestic markets and imports (protection) and exports (subsidies). To a much lesser extent they are concerned with the concentration of market shares by a handful of big food industry companies (eg grain millers, supermarket chains).

The point is not that prices, or market concentration and collusion, are unimportant. Clearly prices are a crucial factor in the entitlements of (especially poorer) food buyers, and prices are affected by the nature and degree of competition between capitals in farming, marketing, processing, and distribution. However, the *filière* approach locates these issues in a wider political economy of production, property and power. It examines how social relations and institutions shape the structure and performance of particular markets, including forms of vertical integration and 'interlocking' of markets, rather than assessing their conformity to, or deviation from, an idealised abstraction of the perfectly competitive market (Mackintosh, 1990).

This can be illustrated briefly by two different senses of the term 'regulation'. In its conventional English language usage, it means legislative, policy and administrative measures affecting markets. The assumption is that regulation is 'external' to markets (or how markets should be), which is seen in the vocabulary of 'intervention' in, 'interference' with, or 'distortion' of, markets. In French, however, and in a political economy sense, 'regulation' can refer to how markets are shaped by particular forms of power and control. Such forms are both economic and political, can be generated within markets as well as outside them, and indeed often dissolve the conventional conceptual boundaries of what is 'endogenous' and 'exogenous' to markets. This usage incorporates a recognition that regulation is an intrinsic, and indeed constitutive, element of markets and how they function in the real world. The salience of these preliminary observations should be apparent in what follows.

Food Security in South Africa: views from apartheid

Three official reports on food-related issues appeared in late-1992, in a context dramatised by that year's drought, the worst since the early-1930s. The reports were on the price mechanism in the food chain by the Board of Tariffs and Trade (BTT), which addressed food price formation and inflation (RSA, 1992a); on the Marketing Act and its various control schemes for agricultural commodities by the Kassier Committee of Inquiry (RSA, 1992b); and on 'the development of a food and nutrition strategy for Southern Africa' (DFNS) from the Department of Agriculture (RSA, 1992c).

The DFNS report addressed food consumption and, implicitly, issues of entitlement. Its three main chapters discussed supply of, and demand for, various foods, the identification of groups at risk in terms of food consumption, and a review of nutritional interventions that could be targeted on these groups.

The report gives 52.7% of the black population below the Minimum Subsistence Level (MSL) in 1989, comprising 24.3% of blacks in metropolitan areas, 63.3% in TVBC, and 62.3% in the 'rest of South Africa'. It then quotes 'the renowned (sic) sociologist Beeghley' to the effect that 'when the (income) threshold is used to indicate the point below which people are in poverty, it must be politically and socially credible. That is, *it must identify a sufficient number of individuals as poor, but not too many...*' (Beeghley, 1983, as quoted in RSA, 1992c:21, my emphasis). The corollary of this insight is that 'the high percentage of the South African population living below the MSL indicates that *our (sic) MSL is too high to serve as a criterion for identifying the nutritionally needy*' (RSA, 1992c:21, my emphasis). It is more precise to say that MSL data are too aggregated to identify those who are *most* food insecure (with the weakest entitlements) rather than too 'high' as an estimate of the poor, most or all of whom may be subject to pressures on their food entitlements. Because the report seeks to identify 'target groups' for nutritional interventions (rather than addressing structural change) it would be overwhelmed by including the 16.3m black people below the MSL. Accordingly, it opts for nutritional rather than income data to select a figure of the nutritionally needy ('sufficient... but not too many') of 2.3m children and pregnant and lactating women, and adds an unspecified proportion of the 1.15m 'persons receiving state aid in 1989', of whom 580 000 were black pensioners.

Insofar as the report confronts issues of entitlements, it is with respect to this smaller (but still large) population of children, mothers, the old and the disabled, through measures such as school feeding programmes and possibly (limited) food coupons (ie entitlement protection). It also recommends enrichment (with vitamins and minerals) of bread and maize meal. It approves - subject to appropriate regulation - feeding schemes operated by voluntary organisations. Firstly, it rejects (in line with its anxiety about an over-generous MSL) any general consumer subsidy on food staples (specifically bread and maize meal). Otherwise, it gestures towards entitlement promotion through skills training and asset-creating employment generation, and 'small farmer upliftment in developing areas' on the model of the DBSA's Farmer Support Programme (FSP) and NGO schemes like Operation Hunger's vegetable gardens (RSA, 1992c:33, 41-2).

The peculiarities of the DFNS report reflect its collaboration between the Department of Agriculture and the Department of National Health and Popula-

tion Development. The former is unable to envisage any restructuring of the relations of property and production of white farming, and in terms of production can only recommend a diversification from maize to oilseeds and soya. Interestingly (and sharing the stance of 'organised agriculture'), it expresses concern about the secrecy - and implicitly the business tactics - of the big food distribution companies (RSA, 1992c:v, 2, 14, 87). The Department of National Health, for its part, is keen to rationalise (bring under its central control) the organisation of health services, to establish nutrition monitoring (in relation to a 'manageable' population), to be proactive rather than reactive. In short, it aims to stake a claim as a serious welfare agency in the approach to the 'new' South Africa.

By contrast with this reticence about white farming and its institutional nexus, the Kassier and BTT reports embrace the movement towards deregulation of agricultural marketing and pricing. The principal recommendation of Kassier was the abolition of the statutory powers of the marketing boards, and their replacement with a much more limited role for government agencies with greater accountability and legitimacy, for example, through stronger consumer (read black) representation. The combination of a new legitimacy with the efficiency gains (including incentives to improve farm productivity) of deregulation, 'should ensure that sufficient supplies of food at affordable and internationally competitive prices are available at the household level' (RSA, 1992b:xii). Thus promoting efficient food production *and* marketing to generate affordable prices on the supply side, but leaving the question of how need translates into entitlement on the demand side.

When the first draft of the BTT report (RSA, 1992a) was released in mid-1992, the pro-deregulation media seized on it as 'proof' that the costs of the marketing boards accounted for the major part of food price inflation. More informed readers of the report, in its draft and final versions, were sceptical about its methodology and findings. First, those committed to deregulation pointed out that their concern is with how the control schemes 'distort' prices, not with the direct costs of the marketing boards. The latter barely impact on food prices, and include the costs of certain useful functions which should be discharged by public agencies and which, if privatised, would cost food consumers more. Second, some agricultural economists - and no doubt all trade unionists and other working-class food consumers (eg SACCAWU, 1992) - were sceptical of the clean bill of market health, so to speak, awarded to the big food distribution companies. Their contribution to food price inflation, according to the BTT, was not due to market manoeuvres or profit rates, but to rising costs, including wage inflation and the increased costs of deliveries to 'unrest' areas.

These three official reports are, of course, only the tip of an iceberg. Government policy and action on agriculture has been directed to the supply side rather

than the 'demand' side, especially the needs/entitlements of the black population. 'Food security' was typically understood as national self-sufficiency in food production, one element (and the most easily realised) of the autarchic fantasies of apartheid state capitalism. White farmers stressed food as a strategic commodity to legitimate the levels of support they enjoyed historically.

The early-1980s were something of a watershed for commercial agriculture as the government began to reduce (however timidly at first) the subsidies and support white farmers had amassed for themselves over the previous 30 years. Creeping liberalisation and deregulation of agricultural production, finance and trade, accentuated the incipient accumulation crisis of key branches of white farming as its boom years came to an end, and also connected with the split of the CP from the NP in 1982. The CP soon came to dominate the white rural constituencies and provincial agricultural unions of the Transvaal and Orange Free State, previously bastions of NP and Broederbond political patronage (like all the main institutions of 'organised agriculture').

While the government initiated creeping liberalisation, a much more combative campaign for agricultural deregulation brought together 'renegade' producers' organisations, some big business interests (eg animal feed manufacturers and the poultry industry), (white) consumer groups, and a number of agricultural economists, consultants and commentators (including Professor Kassier). Again, their main agenda is supply side efficiency and its benefits of greater 'consumer choice'. Their campaign pitted itself against the entrenched defences of 'organised agriculture' in the South African Agricultural Union (SAAU), cooperatives, marketing boards and (most) commodity organisations. The most striking case of a protracted and intense battle over deregulation being in the red meat industry. Any benefits to black (especially poorer) consumers from this all-white struggle over market-based reform of all-white agriculture are incidental. Enlarging 'consumer choice' can only benefit consumers positioned, in both income and spatial terms, to take advantage of it.

In 1992-3, the government provided 'drought relief' totalling R3.4 billion. Most of this (70% or more) went to support white farmers, especially by easing their debts (and which has been further extended for the next three years (Van Zyl, 1993)). Why was this done by a fiscally hard-pressed government that had been trying to promote a more 'entrepreneurial' approach to farming through gradual deregulation? It is an expensive way to try to buy back white rural votes from the CP. The strategic objective was to prevent the foreclosure and abandonment of white farms, and to maintain prices in the land market. In short, it sought to ensure the reproduction of existing property rights after apartheid, and to obstruct the scope of any land reform programme that might be introduced by a future democratic government.

Table 1: Food Security at the End of Apartheid

	The current situation	Government (DFNS, RSA 1992c)	Government (other)
Production/supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • largely self-sufficient (excepting red meat, vegetable oils) • dominated by white farming, some branches/ farmers under severe pressure (especially highveld grain, extensive live-stock) • little data on bantustans but highly dependent on food 'imports' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leave structure of ownership/production intact • diversification from maize to oilseeds, soya 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gradual (and incomplete) withdrawal of subsidies and support to promote more 'entrepreneurial' white farming • but also (1992 on) 'drought relief package' to cushion white farm debt, maintain prices in land market • minimal land reform after apartheid (and anticipatory blocking measures)
Marketing/pricing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • range of government marketing schemes with different pricing regimes • key role of coops in marketing (and grain storage) • some 'free' markets and recent deregulation measures • increasing gap producer/consumer prices • food price inflation above general rate of inflation? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creeping deregulation (RSA 1992b) • decontrol of wheat flour and bread prices • VAT exemption of some basic foods (following COSATU campaign)
Processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • domination by large companies (private and coops) in most foods • high degree of vertical integration in some branches (eg red meat) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recommends (more) enrichment of staples (bread, maize meal) industries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no attempt to deregulate/restrain concentration in food processing industries

	The current situation	Government (DFNS, RSA 1992c)	Government (other)
Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wholesalers • supermarket chains • independent retailers (including black businesses in townships and bantustans) • increasing 'marketing margins' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • needs investigation (suspicious of big companies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • distribution companies 'exonerated' in BTT study of food price inflation (RSA 1992a)
Entitlements/consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no precise data but 16.3m of black population below poverty line (MSL) in 1989 • massive structural unemployment • pressure on entitlements from food price inflation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at (greatest) risk: 2.3m black women and children, plus old and disabled • (limited) entitlement protection targeted on at risk groups; no general consumer subsidies • (gestural) entitlement promotion: skills training, employment and asset creation, 'upliftment of small farmers in developing areas' (FSP model) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no entitlement promotion • very limited and belated entitlement protection in bantustans under 'drought relief' (mostly food parcels) • collaboration with CFDRD (especially Department of National Health and Population Development)

1992 was marked by a combination of the drought, the campaign against the introduction of VAT by COSATU (partly successful in the exemption of some basic foods (VCC, 1992)), the moves towards welfare provision via nutrition interventions signalled by the DFNS report, and a concerted push by NGOs and others through the Consultative Forum on Drought and Rural Development (CFDRD) established in July 1992. In this conjuncture the government did allocate some funds to drought relief in the bantustans and pledged some initiatives in food-related poverty alleviation. Under pressure from, and in collaboration with, the CFDRD (which includes COSATU, and the DBSA), there was a commitment to establishing a National Early Warning System for Food Security (NEWS) and a National Nutrition Surveillance System (NNSS). An evaluation of the government's National Nutrition and Social Development Programme (NNSDP), also established in 1992, by the CFDRD's Nutrition Task Force was also established (Adams, 1993).

These initiatives were welcome, in principle, even though they were so belated and limited a recognition of entitlement failures of the black population, especially in the bantustans, by South Africa's last apartheid government in the approach to its impending demise. The CFDRD has reviewed critically the design and implementation of 'assistance' measures in 1992-3 (including the lack of community involvement, and narrow focus on relief through food parcels (see also VCC, 1992)), and its Employment Task Force has generated 'a comprehensive proposal for a community-based, labour-intensive Public Works Programme' (Adams, 1993). Such measures are, of course, mostly directed to entitlement protection, important as that is. Entitlement promotion, and establishing household food security, on the scale required, bring in issues of a strategic macro-economic - and above all, political - nature.

Food Security: Democratic Alternatives

A number of documents from the democratic movement during the 'transition' period have begun to address issues of food security both directly and indirectly. The latter refers to more general livelihood and entitlement issues within the agenda of what Drèze and Sen call 'support-led security' (as outlined above). These documents (limited to those available to me at the time of writing) include the *Policy Guidelines* (ANC, 1992), the agenda for the VAT summit of June 1992 (VCC, 1992), drafts of ANC Policy Briefs on *Food Security and Food Policy* (ANC, 1993a) and *Agricultural Marketing and Pricing* (ANC, 1993b), the fifth draft of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP, 1993), and a paper on a food security monitoring system for South Africa from CFDRD (1993). First, Table 2 summarises the six 'policy principles' and eleven 'policy proposals' of the ANC Policy Brief on *Food Security and Food Policy* (the most systematic statement to date).

Comparing the principles and proposals in Table 2 with the inherited situation (including its belated and limited entitlement protection) outlined in Table 1, it is evident that the ANC's Policy Brief represents significant steps in the right direction. One index of this is that certain measures proposed appear under, and serve to connect, both production/supply and other headings, for example, the priority of food price stabilisation, and - of greatest potential significance - the more central place of black farming in both production and consumption (entitlements).

Starting with production and supply, the broad principles noted can bear some brief elaboration. First, concerning basic grains, it is argued that South African agriculture (still understood as white farming) can compete successfully with imports, that is, when domestic producer prices are compared with the delivered costs of imported grains, especially if the former are released from the burden

Table 2: Summary of Food Security and Food Policy (ANC 1993a)

	Policy principles (I-IV)	Policy proposals (1-11)
Production/ supply	<p>I National food security through 'most efficient combination' of domestic production, stocks, and trade, consistent with broader targets for economic growth and employment and agricultural restructuring</p> <p>II Trade policy by GATT rules which ANC 'broadly supports' (see III following)</p> <p>III Role and levels of tariffs to be considered in relation to objectives of food price stabilisation, long term growth of food and other agro-industries</p> <p>IV Strategy concerning overall role of agriculture in national economy, and sensitivity to needs of regional neighbours</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (implicitly) 'reformed' white agriculture, plus measures to improve access of black farmers to land, credit, etc (10), improved technologies for labour-intensive production and on-farm storage (9) • public sector stocks to stabilise prices, with size determined by costs/benefits of stocks relative to other alternatives (2) • tariffs vs quantitative controls as main instrument of protection, with long term planned reduction of tariffs subject to careful assessment of effects on employment and output growth (1)
Marketing/ pricing	<p>VI Measures to reduce marketing margins to benefit of producers and consumers (and deregulation as broadly recommended by Kassier, RSA 1992b - see ANC 1993)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no price and margin controls (5) except for standard bread (6) as long as not inhibiting new entrants (flour milling, baking) • main policy instrument is competition policy vs high degree of concentration and to encourage new entrants (5) • price stabilisation instruments: stocking policy (2), trade policy (1) • VAT exemption on basic foods
Processing	(VI Reducing margins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • competition policy (5, as above) • consumer protection on hygiene standards (11)
Distribution	(VI Reducing margins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • competition policy (5, as above) • 'more balanced distribution' of supermarket outlets, to overcome inefficiencies in distribution and impact of high rents (generated by concentration?) (7)
Entitlements/ consumption	<p>V Food security interventions to ensure stable supply and affordability of foods important to low income households, and most efficient combination of measures to stabilise prices and to support incomes against price variability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • price stabilisation measures, as above (supply) • targeted income transfers and food subsidies, maintaining/increasing real value of pensions (3) (= entitlement protection) • public works programmes (4) (= entitlement protection/promotion) • encouragement of black farming (9, 10) (= entitlement promotion)

of pan-territorial pricing and the latter are calculated for delivery to the interior of the country (Willemsse et al, 1993:35). Second, with respect to maize, there is a strong case for prioritising the cultivation of white maize as a food staple over yellow maize as an ingredient of animal (especially poultry and pig) feed. Any resulting shortfalls in yellow maize production can be made up by imports (Bernstein, 1993). Yellow maize imports to coastal centres of animal feed manufacture provide the clearest case where import parity prices may outcompete those of domestic producers. A third, and different, point is that a flexible import policy could help ease any disruptions in food supply from domestic production accompanying land redistribution (Raikes, 1993). Land redistribution and agrarian restructuring are at the core of a democratic food strategy, and are considered more fully below.

On marketing and pricing, the ANC Policy Brief (see also ANC, 1993b) follows the broad recommendations of the Kassier Committee Report (RSA, 1992b) on deregulation of the control schemes and Marketing Boards that administer them, leaving (some) reformed Boards with reduced functions. Administrative price determination and single channel marketing would go, but Boards could set a floor price for appropriate commodities and provide an element of competition with private traders (including cooperatives). Evidently, dismantling the privileges of white farming, both fiscal and institutional, is a major priority (ANC, 1992:28-9), and a point of convergence between the deregulation campaign waged by a number of business interests and ideologues in South Africa (noted earlier) and the interests of the democratic movement. However, this is not a *sufficient* condition of marketing and pricing in a democratic food strategy, which requires policies both to promote black farming (not least its market access and incentives) and to safeguard the entitlements of poorer (non-agricultural) consumers.

It follows that much more consideration needs to be given to the virtually blanket rejection of price and margin controls in marketing (and also processing and distribution) in the ANC Policy Brief, in favour of competition policy as the principal policy instrument in delivering affordable food. First, it seems unlikely that competition policy alone will dislodge the entrenched market concentration of corporate capital in the food industries, as even the World Bank recognises:

An active anti-trust policy is 'likely to prove difficult' given the 'financial leverage' of 'existing conglomerates' and the likelihood that divested subsidiaries will remain in the hands of one or another of these institutions. All that remains is to 'promote changes in the economic environment' by regulating statutory (ie government - HB) monopolies and restrictive barriers to entry and prosecuting restrictive practices (Williams, 1993:16, summarising World Bank, 1993a).

The food industry giants, and their powers, have been regarded with increasing unease by organised agriculture, by economists favouring deregulation (eg Van Zyl and Kirsten, 1992:177-9), and, for different reasons, by the trade union movement (SACCAWU, 1992; VCC, 1992). Among the proposals of the union campaign against VAT in 1992 were establishing Workers Price Monitoring Committees (delegated to SACCAWU) and a 'workers' basket' of food staples to assess food price inflation, as an alternative to the weighted basket used to construct the Consumer Price Index (CPI) by the government's Central Statistical Services (CSS). Further consideration of the case for (and against) price and margin controls in food marketing, processing and distribution, should include a prominent role for trade unions (and other popular organisations) in food price monitoring.

Second, the other side of the coin of competition policy is encouraging 'new entrants' with a concern not to inhibit this by price and margin controls. Interestingly, the agenda of the VCC (1992) included easing existing (legal and administrative) barriers to the activities of small enterprises, especially in food retailing. As with land reform and agrarian restructuring, promoting smaller enterprises in food marketing, processing and distribution will require more proactive and imaginative measures than the provisions of competition policy alone allow, and connects with broader issues of 'accumulation from below' (Neocosmos, 1993; see section following). Finally, on prices, the ANC is committed to VAT exemption on basic foods, although what is defined as basic may be contentious. The VCC (1992) listed red and white meat, white and brown bread, maize, maize meal and rice and stampmielies, full milk, milk powder, vegetables, cooking oil, tinned fish and beans, while the CFDRD (1993:7) contends that 'there can be no argument for zero-rating red meat, for instance, however popular that would be with the slightly less poor (sic)'.

Moving on to entitlements and consumption, the ANC Policy Brief focuses on themes of the government's DFNS report (RSA, 1992c) but takes them much further, and on the agenda being developed by the CFDRD (1993). On entitlement protection, the Policy Brief recommends price stabilisation, targeted income transfers and food subsidies, and maintaining and increasing the real value of pensions (which is ANC policy). To the last should be added the objective of extending social security to encompass not only all the old and disabled, but also the unemployed and distinctive groups of the poor like female-headed households (ANC, 1992). Public works programmes can comprise, and connect, both entitlement protection and promotion, as the infrastructure they develop, if properly planned, can provide an important stimulus to further employment and economic growth more generally. Two key areas of public works programmes of this kind are the adequate provision and improvement of infrastructure in the

townships (including those in the bantustans), and in bantustan rural areas (roads, dams, wells, bridges, soil conservation works, public buildings, afforestation etc).

Employment creation is probably the most strategic element of Drèze and Sen's conception of development based on 'support-led security', and of any democratic path of economic recovery, as recognised by the ANC (1992), by COSATU, and in the draft documents of the Alliance's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). Employment creation has to be at the core of macroeconomic strategy; taken to include self-employment as well, it is also key to land reform and agrarian restructuring.

The ANC Policy Brief is quiet, if not altogether silent, on land reform, for whatever reasons: possibly because it deals with only one area of issues to be integrated into a more comprehensive ANC position on land and agriculture. Another possible explanation is because debate on land reform and agrarian restructuring is fairly recent and still very open. Alternatively it could be because of the opposite circumstance - that the ANC, through the LAPC, has more or less entrusted 'expert' consultation, and policy prescription and design, to the World Bank, its allies and clients. In this respect, the reticence of the Policy Brief contrasts with the *Policy Guidelines* from the national delegate conference (ANC, 1992) and the commitment of the Alliance (RDP, 1993:14) to 'a fundamental land reform programme'. As land reform is the subject of an increasingly intense debate (see Levin and Weiner, 1993), I limit myself to some of its main implications for food security, starting with endowments and entitlements.

Politically, it is axiomatic here that as comprehensive a land redistribution as possible should be a cardinal objective, first to attack the virtually monopoly control of land that is a crucial pillar of white domination, and to start to redress the history of black dispossession and national oppression. This is not about 'equity' or 'justice'. It is about *power*. The power of the *property rights* created by, and inherited from, apartheid. Wide-ranging land redistribution is also about the struggle against poverty and insecurity, by providing assets and endowments desperately needed for livelihoods, creating conditions in which black farmers can compete with white farmers, in which a more diversified and viable agriculture can develop. Different people want land for different purposes: which people, which purposes, which land, its conditions of occupancy, title and use, the weight of demands for, and possibly conflicting claims over, land, can only be known, assessed and negotiated through a mass democratic politics of the land question, with all the 'messiness' and unevenness that entails. This contrasts with the blueprint of the World Bank which, extensive as it is (envisaging the resettlement of 600 000 households on perhaps 30% of medium and high quality land currently owned by whites (Williams, 1993:23, 25)), is to be 'designed by

experts, delivered by the state, and driven by the logic of the market' (Bernstein, 1994). In this conception, land will be allocated to carefully selected 'beneficiaries' able to contribute some savings or other assets, and committed to deriving a quarter to three-quarters of their income from agriculture as productive and efficient farmers - in short, a policy of 'betting on the strong'.

This approach is echoed in the statement of the Policy Brief on *Food Security* (ANC, 1993a:6) that 'there is little evidence to suggest that large numbers of the rural population would wish to produce food for their own consumption if alternative cash crop or other income-generating opportunities exist'. The response to this is that there is *virtually no evidence of any kind of what rural people want* (and which rural people), because they are not asked what they want. Further, while rural people are hardly likely to aspire to the means of food self-provisioning as an exclusive source of livelihood, the availability (or otherwise) of alternatives is what is at issue, and a (significant) capacity in food self-provisioning - in combination with other sources of income - may be prized by many, not least women farmers. In a similar vein, the CFDRD (1993:2) states that agricultural policy 'must encourage farmers at whatever scale of enterprise to become *business operators* (in a variable environment)... not just producers' (my emphasis). This is uncomfortably close (or identical) to the message of NP governments to white farmers in the last 15 years or so. It also, like the World Bank, links land redistribution to 'efficient' resource use as defined by commodity production, and indeed (implicitly) particular models of commodity production (Raikes, 1993; Williams, 1993).

This is the tip of another iceberg, the larger shape of which, in the World Bank's words, is the 'tension... between the *desire to address welfare objectives* through the distribution of land and the *need to promote the productive use of agricultural land*' (World Bank, 1993b:2, emphasis in original, as cited by Williams, 1993:24). Does this mean that the use of (redistributed) land for self-provisioning in food (or for other non-commodity uses to support or enhance entitlements) is not productive for those concerned? That 'welfare' is divorced from 'productivity' and 'efficiency'? There is a profound (bourgeois) ideological duality at work here: that 'welfare' is necessarily 'pure cost' with no economic rationale or returns (see Raikes, 1993:6), a duality that the conception of 'support-led security' rejects, as Drèze and Sen make explicit (1989:183-8, 197-203, on the 'very large "growth equivalent" of public support').

The welfare/efficiency 'tension' also bears on issues of the links between land reform as entitlement promotion and aggregate food production on the supply side. Will land redistribution depress the supply of domestically produced food? And if so, how much does it matter (in relation to other objectives)?

It is important to be very clear that *the means by which (land*

reform) will achieve food security is by providing incomes for poor people, whether in cash or kind, rather than by increasing the physical supply of food. If this is to have the maximum effect of increasing food security, it implies transferring the maximum quantity and quality of land to as many people as possible... (Raikes, 1993:8, emphasis in original).

To the extent that land formerly used for commercial food production by white farmers is redistributed to black farmers who use some of it for their own food provisioning, this reduces market demand for food commodities, other things being equal. Second, while some farmers may have self-provisioning in food as a priority, others may not. If by growing other crops 'they can earn (say) the money to buy two sacks of maize off land which would have produced only one sack then they are clearly right to do so' (Raikes, 1993:8). Third, there is no reason why black farmers who want to engage in commercial food production should do so any less efficiently than white farmers, if market incentives and other enabling conditions are in place. Raikes also emphasises that black farmers on land made available by redistribution should not be subjected to 'modernisation' programmes that impose inappropriate technologies and costs, but should be able to make different kinds of choices (like those indicated) to suit their own circumstances. The poor record of small farmer 'modernisation' projects is only too familiar from elsewhere in Africa; its current exemplar in South Africa is the Farmer Support Programme (FSP) of the DBSA, with its less than impressive results (Raikes, 1993:13; Williams, 1993:8-9).

Finally, white agriculture in South Africa usually produces grain in excess of domestic demand, with surpluses exported at a loss. This allows some margin for a reduction in aggregate (marketed) grain supply in relation to need. If 'judicious imports in years of low production are usually much cheaper than overproduction in good years' (CFDRD, 1993: 1), a similar rationale applies to the use of grain imports to make up any shortfalls in aggregate domestic production (especially of yellow maize) due to disruptions arising from land reform and agrarian restructuring, or indeed if grain cultivation is partly replaced by higher value crops for both the domestic and export markets.

Food Security: sites of democratic struggle

The sites of democratic struggle around food security are located within a broader terrain of democratic politics, mapped by three kinds of considerations. The first is the balance between democratic forces, their organisations and practices, and the interests and stratagems of capital and the social forces aligned with it. South Africa will continue to be a capitalist society after apartheid, contrary to the analyses and expectations of earlier periods of the liberation

struggle. The question, then, is: what kind of capitalist society? And how will that be decided?

The second kind of consideration is noted in the introduction to the *Policy Guidelines*:

It is critical... that we honestly face up to the extent of the problems facing our country. They are not going to be solved overnight and there are no easy or quick solutions. The problems run deep and resources are limited... (The policies proposed here) highlight our ultimate goals, which will need to be transformed into effective and realisable programmes in the short-run... In other words, we will need to establish priorities both within each of the different policy areas and between these broad areas (ANC, 1992:3, emphasis in original).

The third is indicated by what follows immediately:

These priorities must be arrived at through democratic discussions and decision-making processes and we must establish just and efficient mechanisms for implementing these decisions. Progress will also depend on involving as many sectors of our society as possible in finding solutions (ANC, 1992:3).

Taken together, these considerations, and the processes they sketch (and imply) will define the possibilities - and how they might expand or contract - of 'structural reform' (Saul, 1991) in a post-apartheid but still capitalist South Africa. This includes the ways in which, and extent to which, structural reform can establish the conditions of reconstruction and development centred on 'support-led security'. In this concluding section, I comment on each of these three considerations in relation to sites of democratic struggle over food security.

On the first (and most overarching) we can distinguish three kinds of 'social democracy'. The first is the most straightforward: it is that of avowed social democrats, and is mostly concerned to assess the viability and effectiveness of different redistribution strategies, and to balance redistribution to overcome poverty with the demands of economic recovery and growth (eg Moll et al, 1991). It is not concerned with mass politics except insofar as the 'realism' of the policy mix it aspires to could be subverted by the demands of various constituencies. The political terrain of this social democracy is enlightened and efficient policy design for government, and its negotiation with capital.

A second species of 'social democracy' is a retreatist one, that is, retreating from earlier conceptions and hopes that socialist construction would commence with the end of apartheid. This pervades the thinking of many sections of the broad movement (or their leadership), and has probably been considered most systematically by COSATU and its organic intellectuals, for example, in debates in the *South African Labour Bulletin*. Its political terrain tends to be demarcated

by the most organised constituencies like the trade unions, with their depth of experience in contesting, but also bargaining with, both capital and the state. The trajectory of this kind of 'social democracy' could lead to a post-apartheid corporatism, considered a positive outcome by some (eg Maree, 1993), a defeat by others (eg Harris, 1993).

A third and alternative conception focuses on demands and practices explicable by a new phase of national democratic struggle initiated by the end of apartheid. The concept of a new stage of national democratic struggle was formerly attacked by most on the left as mechanical, 'stageist', 'reformist', etc. However, in the conditions of the negotiated transition from apartheid since 1990 this is the only strategic theoretical position the left now has to confront the project of a de-racialised capitalism (and the forces mobilised behind it), the project of 'political and economic liberalisation' that the World Bank, among others, is committed to (World Bank, 1993b:1, as cited by Williams, 1993:2, my emphasis). The key point here is that 'social democratic' demands are the means of strategic offensive rather than retreat (into corporatism, for example), when those means are centred on building political capacities (organisations, practices) to elaborate and press demands, and thereby to establish and enhance the prospects of longer term transformation. This corresponds to programmatic 'structural reform' that contests (rather than surrenders to) the relations of power inherited by a de-racialising capitalist social order in South Africa.

The most systematic theorisation of national democratic struggle in southern Africa that I know is by Neocosmos (1993). This explicates one of its key dynamics as 'accumulation from below', a terrain and process of struggle that is as social and political as it is economic, and encompasses a wide range of sites of democratic demands and practices in civil society. At the same time, struggles generated within civil society should not be diffused, and their dynamic lost, in an indiscriminate commitment to 'pluralism'. Rather their energies and gains should be combined and consolidated within the development of a class project and state project (Gibbon, 1993, and personal communication).

The sites and possibilities of accumulation from below in relation to food security were noted earlier. Most strategically, in the sphere of production, it requires a land reform that goes beyond land restitution (and its manifest uncertainties) on one hand, and market-based land redistribution, as proposed by the World Bank (and accepted by the ANC?), on the other hand. To recapitulate, wide-ranging land reform will contribute to the food security of those gaining land, through food self-provisioning and/or the use of their endowments to pursue commodity production, including that of food crops and animal products. Land redistribution will have to be accompanied by support measures to enable productive (ie entitlement enhancing) uses of land, and the same applies

to petty commodity production in food marketing, processing and distribution. Deregulation and an active competition policy may be necessary, but certainly are not sufficient, conditions of encouraging new entrants in those sectors. The gains to entitlements here, as in farming, include those arising from employment creation (in less capital-intensive forms of enterprise and labour process), and the competition effect of locational and cost advantages against corporate food industry capitals, which are highly concentrated spatially as well as economically.

The concept of *accumulation from below* applies to farming and the branches of activity downstream of it because they will be based in *commodity relations*, albeit commodity relations predicated on more democratic political conditions that contest both the historic position of white farming and corporate capital (the result of the privileges and rents of apartheid, direct and indirect), and the historic structures of chiefly and bureaucratic power key to access to land, and to other assets and rents, in the bantustans (Neocosmos, 1993). The extent to which processes of accumulation from below (and the new forms of class formation and struggle they generate) are realised, depends then on the course of democratic struggle, which I come back to.

The second kind of consideration was outlined at the beginning of this section. It concerns the scale of the problems inherited from apartheid, and the limitations on (government) resources to deal with them. This needs only brief mention here, as it connects so directly with the third area of issues: the political process through which priorities are established, and immediate objectives pursued. At this point, it is necessary only to note the following. First, that current government support to white farming is conservatively estimated at R2 billion a year (ANC, 1993a:2). Second, that the costs of market-based land reform on the scale envisaged by the World Bank, while unknown to any degree of precision, will be great (Williams, 1993:25-7). In short, and however crudely, there are two substantial sources of government finance - one actual and one potential - to allocate to a more radical land redistribution and the measures of agrarian restructuring that need to accompany it.

This brings us to the third area of consideration, which is as speculative as it is strategic. A principal problem here is the inherited theoretical and political vacuum on the agrarian question (Bernstein, 1994). This has been only marginally redressed by the record and experience of the rural action organisations combined in the National Land Committee and of certain other NGOs (valuable as that record is), and by the recently initiated debate on agrarian reform. In any case, so much of the agenda in the debate is being set by the nexus linking the World Bank, the DBSA, and the *verligte* academics of the universities of Stellenbosch and Pretoria, with the apparent blessing of the LAPC.

The key absence, of course, is that of the political organisation, representation

and voices of the dispossessed masses, above all in the bantustans, which constitutes the rationale and importance of the work of the CPLAR. We know that there is a widespread desire for land, and also a widespread expectation of acquiring land, but that it is not (sufficiently) articulated to have a significant impact on the ANC leadership in its deliberations of priorities. This, then, is a (or *the*) key site of democratic political concern and priority bearing on food security.

This argument necessarily encompasses other measures of agrarian restructuring as well. The ANC (1992:28-9) has rightly emphasised that the 'hidden monopolies and controls that exist in agriculture by virtue of the control linkages between agricultural credit, marketing, commercial cooperatives, the Land Bank and the South African Agricultural Union, must be broken up to enable new farmers to enter the sector'. Elsewhere I have suggested that deregulation alone is insufficient to accomplish this, specifically with respect to the big grain cooperatives (Bernstein, 1993). 'Deregulation', in the attenuated sense of removing statutory controls and other forms of government intervention (*à la* Kassier), may well lead to even greater regulation, in the political economy sense, of agricultural *filières* by the cooperatives that straddle input and credit supply, marketing and processing, and by food industry corporate capitals. Despite the clear statement of the *Policy Guidelines* cited, we find World Bank commissioned and LAPC published reports advocating a key role for the established cooperatives in facilitating the 'emergence' of black farmers (eg Willemsse et al, 1993:39).

The alternative democratic position is that land reform has to be accompanied by extensive 'structural reform' of institutions. A reform that would generate a range of means of providing credit, inputs, and technical assistance, of resource management (including, as appropriate, collective management of soil, water, grazing and timber resources), of marketing and on-farm (or collective) storage and processing, responsive to the needs and initiatives of black farmers, and that are *under their control*. The same argument, as already noted, also applies to the conditions of development of smaller-scale commodity production in food marketing, processing and distribution.

The counterpoint to the political vacuum on the agrarian question is that urban constituencies (trade unions, civics, black business and consumer associations, student organisations, NGOs) are much more strongly positioned to press their demands than the rural, and bantustan, masses. Accordingly, measures to strengthen food entitlements in the cities - whether through targeted income transfers and food subsidies, or through public works programmes - may assume priority. Indeed, there is a danger that the desire of the urban poor for affordable and better diets may be appropriated to safeguard the 'productive core' of white

farming in ways that marginalise democratic agrarian restructuring. Avoiding this danger requires educating urban constituencies about the strategic importance of democratic land reform and agrarian restructuring, which would be stimulated by the mobilisation and organisation of the rural and bantustan masses on the land question.

Otherwise, and in line with the commitment of the *Policy Guidelines* to involving the organisations of civil society in policy making and implementation, trade unions and civics should have a key role in monitoring food prices and the operations of food industry companies, as proposed during the campaign against VAT in 1992 (SACCAWU, 1992). At that time, the implementation of these proposals was severely limited by all the other demands on shop stewards and union activists. A democratic government could facilitate effective public action in these sites of control over food security, not only by delegating but also by financing the exercise of these functions by trade unions (rather than by civil servants), which would also help extend the scope of trade union capacity.

Finally, and by extension, resources could also be made available to experiment with forms of cooperative distribution (retailing) of food on a workplace basis (through the unions) or more comprehensively on a residential basis (through civics, CBOs, women's organisations), which could also link on the supply side with cooperative marketing by small-scale farmers. This would have to be experimental to test whether it is able to distribute food more cheaply and efficiently than other channels of distribution, including those of informal commodity circuits in the townships. Little is known about the latter, but for some commodities (eg red meat) they appear susceptible to the gangsterism that pervades much of the urban informal sector of goods and services, to which cooperative organisation of retail food distribution might provide a democratic alternative.

NOTE

- 1 This is a marginally edited version of a paper presented at the final workshop of the research programme on *Community Perspectives on Land and Agrarian Reform* (CPLAR) directed by Richard Levin and Dan Weiner. The workshop was held in Johannesburg on 11-13 March 1994. The paper is part of work in progress, and represents a first attempt to sketch a framework that integrates analytical, political and policy concerns. Ongoing work includes developing the framework proposed here at a general level (eg by incorporating new data on poverty and nutrition as they become available, and by exploring in greater depth and detail linkages between land redistribution and household and national food security), and applying the framework to empirical material on Eastern Transvaal bantustans generated by CPLAR research.

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