

Land Deals and Agro-investment within a Contested Land Reform Programme in Zimbabwe

Prosper B Matondi¹

¹ Ruzivo Trust, Harare, Zimbabwe

prosper@ruzivo.co.zw

Zimbabwe has gone through a radical land reform programme, which has resulted in the acquisition of over 90% of the former large scale commercial farms for redistribution to over 160,000 poor and potential commercial farmers of a different character from the commercial farms before 2000. The new agrarian structure is composed of small to medium farms. In the midst of the transfers and of this new agrarian structure, new forms of land acquisition are emerging veering again towards large holding and benefitting not just the former commercial land owners, but also international investors. In this paper I will discuss how the process is emerging in a context of high stakes politics over land ownership and use. The paper will decipher the character, scale and distribution of land out sourcing by foreigners. At the same time, government in wanting to be seen to be utilizing the land it has acquired following less than expected production in the last 10 years of the land reform programme is embracing new land concentration. Critics of the fast track land reform feel vindicated because agriculture has not performed to expectation, thus putting pressure to commercialise and offer land to large commercial farmers (and foreigners) with skills and capital on government terms of land ownership. I will examine how the process impact the poor communities' access to land itself and natural resources in Masvingo and Manicaland provinces of Zimbabwe. The agro-investments projects have a different character, one led by government in partnership with private sector, and the other led by the private sector in partnership with an independent Trust. The aim is to establish the lessons, meanings, narratives and identity of new forms of concentration of land in the political economy of Zimbabwe's land reform programme.