

A discussion document



african centre for biosafety

www.acbio.org.za

Contents

List of figures	3
List of images	3
List of abbreviations and acronyms	4
About this discussion paper	5
Structure of the paper	5
Engaging with policy	6
Introduction	6
What is an agroecological approach?	8
Salient features of South Africa's Agricultural Sector	9
Commercial agriculture	9
Smallholder agriculture	9
Subsistent agriculture	9
Production	9
Contribution to the economy	10
Equity in the sector	10
South African agriculture: policy and status quo in relation to small-scale producers	10
Strategic Plan for Smallholder Support	12
Draft Agroecology Strategy	13
National Strategy for Indigenous Food Crops	14
Draft National Extension Policy	14
Draft Organic Policy	14
Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme	15
Recommendations	17
Annex 1: Agroecology on the ground in South Africa	19
Abalimi Bezekhaya and Harvest of Hope	19
Siyavuna Abalimi Development Centre	20
Biowatch South Africa	21
Ithemba Projects	22
Enaleni Farm	23
John Nzira – Ukuvuna Farm	25
The “foodie movement” and the youth	27
Transitioning to agroecology	28
Phillipi Horticultural Area (PHA)	29
References	30





The African Centre for Biosafety (ACB) is a non-profit organisation, based in Johannesburg, South Africa. It was established to protect Africa's biodiversity, traditional knowledge, food production systems, culture and diversity, from the threats posed by genetic engineering in food and agriculture. It, has in addition to its work in the field of genetic engineering, also opposed biopiracy, agrofuels and the Green Revolution push in Africa, as it strongly supports social justice, equity and ecological sustainability.

The ACB has a respected record of evidence-based work and can play a vital role in the agro-ecological movement by striving towards seed sovereignty, built upon the values of equal access to and use of resources.

©The African Centre for Biosafety
March 2015

www.acbio.org.za
PO Box 29170, Melville 2109 South Africa
Tel: +27 (0)11 486 1156

Design and layout: Adam Rumball, Sharkbouys Designs, Johannesburg
Cover and other illustrations: Vanessa Black



List of figures

Figure 1: The inescapable interconnectedness of agriculture's different roles and functions	8
Figure 2: The sustainable development continuum for organic micro-farming projects	19

List of images

Image 1: Food production in the Cape Flats	20
Image 2: Siyavuna cooperatives	21
Image 3: Biowatch: fresh, healthy produce at local markets	22
Image 4: Ithemba is all about the children	23
Image 5 Entrance to Enaleni	24
Image 6: Award-winning heritage beans	24
Image 7: Indigenous Zulu sheep: rare and hardy	25
Image 8: Diverse cropping and economic strategies in an integrated permaculture design at Ukuvuna	26
Image 9: Markets at Tyisa Nabanye	27



Abbreviations and acronyms

ACB:	African Centre for Biosafety
CASP:	Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme
COPAC:	Cooperative and Policy Alternatives Centre
CSO:	Civil society organisation
DAFF:	Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
ECARP:	Eastern Cape Agricultural Research Programme
FHR:	Foundation for Human Rights
GMO:	Genetically modified organism
IAASTD:	International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development
IFOAM:	International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements
MAFISA:	Micro Agricultural Financial Institutions of South Africa
NGO:	Non-governmental organisation
PHA:	Phillipi Horticultural Area
PLAS:	Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy
SKI:	Seed Knowledge Initiative
SPP:	Surplus People's Project
SPPP:	Strategic Plan for Smallholder Support
TCOE:	Trust for Community Outreach and Education



About this discussion paper

Civil society engaged in a process in 2014 to explore “the right to food” in South Africa through a series of provincial dialogues with small-scale producers, farm workers, supportive non-governmental organisations (NGOs), labour, faith-based organisations and others. These provincial dialogues culminated in a national dialogue on the Right to Food, resulting in the imminent launch of a new cross-sector social movement for Food Sovereignty in South Africa. The process was initiated by the Foundation for Human Rights (FHR) in collaboration with four NGOs – the African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), the Cooperative and Policy Alternatives Centre (COPAC), the Trust for Community Outreach and Education (TCOE) and the Eastern Cape Agricultural Research Programme (ECARP).

As part of the preparatory work for the national dialogue on the Right to Food, the ACB conducted a cursory scan of agroecology projects in South Africa to inform further discussion and debate. This involved site visits as well as collecting information through desktop research and consultation with relevant stakeholders. We also felt it necessary to provide short critiques of some of the key policies appearing to support agro-ecology and to identify potential opportunities to support agro-ecology. While the initial idea was to look for local examples of best practices in agroecology and present these as case studies, time and resource limitations prevented us from visiting the vast array of projects in South Africa, many of them in remote areas, meaning we were unable to do justice to the scope of agroecology in South Africa.

The Right to Food dialogue process has already begun to cover some ground towards creating agreement on principles that should underpin our Food Sovereignty movement and to identify policy areas where we need to intervene and these discussions gave guidance to the policy scan we undertook. Some of the agreed principles that emerged from the Right to Food dialogue included:

- Food sovereignty encompasses the right

and obligation of people to define their own agrarian policies and production in their context using agroecological-farming principles as a base.

- It should also focus on the entire food chain and the concerns throughout the food chain. We therefore need to aim for multi-sector interventions, including land, water, extension support, finance, wages and living conditions, women and youth, rural development and trade policies at a national and international level. In addition, our struggles need to be nested in an alternative economic model that creates sustainable patterns of production, consumption and living.¹
- The movement should be able to influence government and small-scale producers. Those on the ground should head and define the movement with NGOs playing a supporting role.²
- Ultimately, it should strive to produce food that is healthy and of a sufficient variety to be available to all at affordable prices and which is produced in a socially just and environmentally sound manner.³

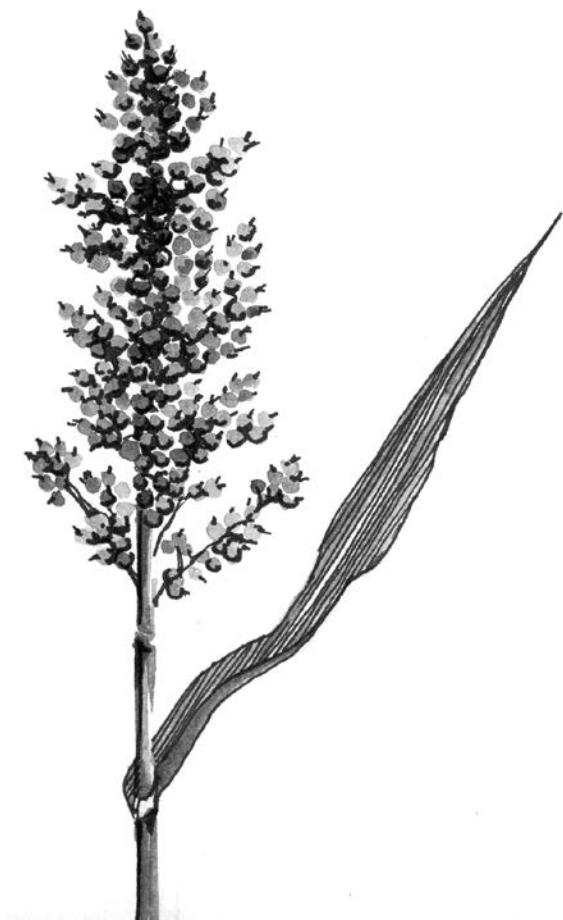
We found that there are many policies relevant to small-scale producers and ecological agriculture spanning across many government departments and pieces of legislation. Many of these policies will not be new to organisations working with small-scale producers and there is already a long record of engagement and advocacy work. This discussion document attempts to contribute to the policy debates by identifying and discussing some key policies that may present opportunities to strengthen the agro-ecology/food sovereignty movement.

It hopes to stimulate feedback on the successes and challenges faced in doing so and to generate a conversation, critique and strategy to use the resources allocated to small-scale producers in a more effective way and to shift our broken and unjust food system.

Structure of the paper

This discussion document presents an overview of the agroecological approach and highlights how far we are from mainstreaming this approach in the South African context. It sketches the salient features of South Africa's





agricultural sector, as defined by the South African Agricultural Production Strategy of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF). It outlines the policy environment relevant to small-scale producers, with a particular focus on DAFF, although many other departments play a role. It identifies current government programmes meant to support small-scale producers and notes the challenges presented by these programmes, as well as identifying several draft policies/strategies with which we could still engage. The document concludes with an overview of several agroecological initiatives underway in South Africa, including those spearheaded by NGOs or managed by individuals or youth groups. The example of the Phillipi Horticultural Area (PHA) is included in this section because, despite it not focusing on ecological production, it demonstrates the successful struggle by small-scale producers to retain agricultural land for food production in the face of rezoning for development. This example is inspiring and instructive for South Africa's food sovereignty movement.

Engaging with policy

Government has committed, since 2009 in particular, to nurturing small-scale producers through a number of programmes. It has allocated substantial funds to these programmes. The most prominent is the well-funded Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP). This programme presents many challenges including that it aligns with the land reform strategy, underpinned by a developmental principle that seeks to replicate the principles of large-scale commercial farming within the small-scale sector. However, government is grappling with all the shortcomings of programme delivery and it could be fruitful to engage in a strategic and unified manner with government on this programme.

Similarly, it would be useful to critique and engage with government on the Strategic Plan for Smallholder Support (SPPP). Associated programmes Ilima/Letsema and Landcare also have substantial budgets. It would be constructive to learn with and from civil society organisations (CSOs) and farmers that have engaged with these programmes.

Additional draft strategies worth engaging with include the:

- National Agroecology Strategy
- National Extension Policy
- National Organic Policy
- National Strategy for Indigenous Food Crops.

Sharing of information among civil society of other important policy processes and coordinated engagement with these should be ongoing.



Introduction

Agroecology is a food production system that is equitable and just, offering decent livelihoods, healthy environments and food, all stemming from collaboration with nature and based on a wide variety of knowledge systems, including indigenous knowledge and the latest science and technology. It is at variance with the way the South African agricultural sector and related value chains are currently organised and operate, in which farmers must be able to compete at economies of scale to feed into an industrialised food system. This system relies on monocrops, elite, often patented, advanced breeding technologies and expensive, environmentally destructive agricultural inputs. It is in the domain of those who have secure land tenure, which is necessary to make huge capital investments worthwhile and it is often a requirement for gaining loans. Furthermore, within this system, a handful of corporations control the production, manufacturing, retailing and distribution of food, exacerbating structural inequalities in the country.

While low-input and environmentally sound production methods are important for realising agroecology in South Africa, a first step must be transforming the currently hostile environment within which small-scale producers operate. Currently all small-scale producers, regardless of their production methods, struggle for technical and infrastructural support and to participate in viable and fair markets.

A plethora of well-intentioned policies in South Africa speaks to uplifting small-scale producers. Often substantial financial resources are committed to implementing these policies. However, the effect to date has been limited. This is due primarily to the complexities of delivering services to millions of small-scale farmers in remote rural areas, the resultant allocation of support to “winners” and large projects, political favouritism and lack of expertise to provide adequate support and services to small-scale producers.⁴ Can a unified food sovereignty movement better access and use the opportunities and budgets afforded to small-scale producers?

“Agroecology is not only about capacity building and agro-ecological innovations on the ground. Agroecology represents a more radical transformation of agriculture, guided by the notion that ecological change in agriculture cannot be promoted without comparable change in the social, political, economic and cultural contexts. Trade liberalization is the main mechanism for driving people from the land and the main obstacle to local economic development and food sovereignty.

It is only by changing the export-led, free trade based industrial agriculture of large farms that poverty, rural-urban migration, low farm worker wages, hunger, and environmental degradation can be stopped”.

Civil Society Statement on the National Agroecology Strategy (coordinated by the Surplus People’s Project)

<http://www.spp.org.za/civil-society-statement-on-the-draft-agroecology-strategy-for-south-africa-draft-7/>

South African CSOs have been promoting and supporting environmentally sound production practices within a value-system of social justice for at least three decades. There are also small-scale producers producing in environmentally sound ways that are unsupported by government or NGOs. This collective and cumulative work represents a treasure trove of expertise, experience and long reach into the most vulnerable societies in our country.

Lack of government support for their efforts seems to be the norm at best, while at worst, it often imposes services in a top-down way, which undermine efforts to create alternative socially just and ecologically sustainable production systems.

During the provincial “Right to Food” dialogues, which took place over a year, participants consistently raised the problem of fragmented efforts towards agroecology, giving the impression that agroecological projects were occurring in isolated pockets all over the country. Participants also highlighted the need



for solidarity and a coherent and organised food sovereignty movement. Such a platform is necessary to lobby for and shape a political and institutional framework to support agroecological production in all its complexities and to access the available funds and services allocated by government for the benefit of small-scale producers in particular. There is also need to share expertise and experiences, as well as put the weight of solidarity behind the multiplicity of food sovereignty campaigns being waged on the ground ranging from access to land and water, fishing rights, decent wages, and the encroachment of mining, to name but a few.

What is an agroecological approach?

The *International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development* (IAASTD) report published in 2008 definitively named agroecology as the most appropriate agricultural system to cater for small-scale producers while meeting our global climate change challenges. This seminal report of an extensive research project into the state of global agriculture, commissioned by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the World Bank, notes

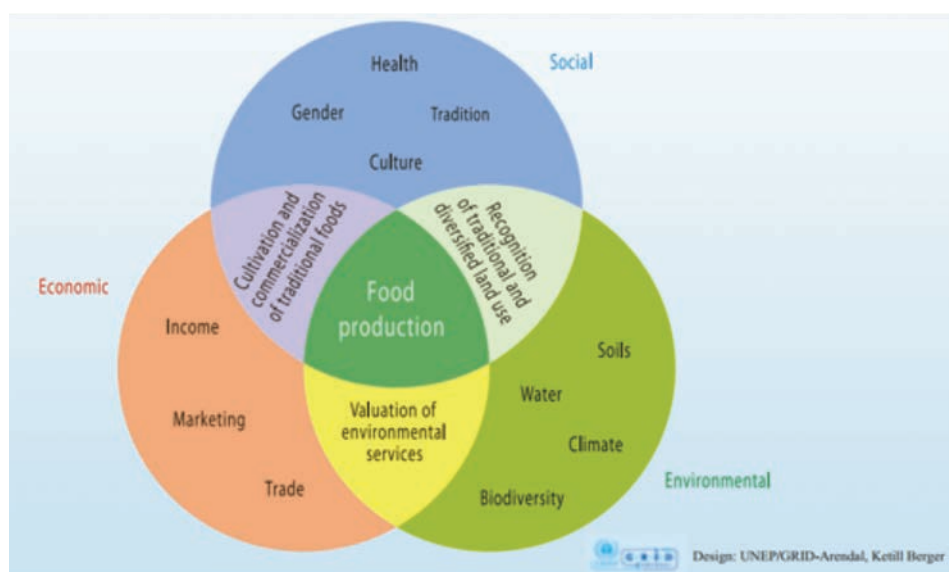
that an “agroecological approach recognizes the multifunctional dimensions of agriculture and facilitates progress toward a broad range of equitable and sustainable development goals. A wide variety of technologies, practices and innovations including local and traditional knowledge draw on the science of agroecology”.⁵

The graphic below, taken from the IAASTD report, shows the interactions of functions that make up a just, resilient and environmentally sound agricultural system. This diversity and complexity is perhaps the biggest challenge to the realisation of agroecology, given our government’s preference for centralised “one-size fits all” solutions to be implemented with the help of private-public partnerships, along with the “silo mentality” of government departments when collaboration is necessary. Perhaps this complexity also divides us as a movement, focusing on our own piece of the puzzle and rarely prioritising together and supporting one another’s struggles.

The sheer complexity of realising agroecology in South Africa is extremely daunting, necessitating strategic prioritisation of key joint initiatives of action by the Food Sovereignty movement. Some of these challenges are highlighted below:

- The issue of land was been given high priority by all stakeholders throughout the Right to Food dialogues.

Figure 1: The inescapable interconnectedness of agriculture’s different roles and functions



- Agroecology is much more than a toolbox of farming techniques; it is a food production system situated within a food sovereignty context and requires the fundamental transformation of the agricultural sector and a shift in current power relations.
- A dearth of knowledge, understanding and expertise within government policymaking, extension services and academic institutions on ecologically sound production methods.
- Government programmes designed to support small-scale producers are instead reaching relatively elite producers, while the most marginalised receive nothing.

Salient features of South Africa's Agricultural Sector

The following section is taken from the South African Agricultural Production Strategy 2011–2025, and is their assessment of the salient features of the sector, covering:⁶

- Commercial agriculture
- Smallholder agriculture
- Subsistent agriculture
- Production
- Contribution to the economy

Commercial agriculture

The commercial sector is made up of less than 40 000 farming units, covering a production area of approximately 82 million hectares, and it is responsible for more than 99% of South Africa's formally marketed agricultural output.

According to the strategy, "There has been a significant increase in the concentration of farm holdings as a result of smaller and less efficient farms, unable to take advantage of increasing economies of scale, being forced out of the sector. Despite the decrease in the number of farming units, output from commercial agriculture has continued to grow, implying an increase in the efficiency of production." The document also reports that despite increased efficiency, "per capita production is at an all-time low", meaning that food security needs are not being met on the

national level. It also raises concerns regarding the massive shedding of jobs in recent years, as well as the concentration evident throughout the value chain, which leads to anti-competitive behaviour, which affects food prices.

Smallholder agriculture

The report notes that there are "1.3 million farming households on about 14 million hectares of agricultural land, which are concentrated principally in the former homeland areas of the country, thus marginalized into regions of poor productive land, with little or no infrastructural support, and water resources. Smallholders are characterised as having typically low levels of production efficiency, and engaging in agricultural production to supplement their household food requirements, with surplus sold at local markets.

Smallholder farmers' production inefficiency is further related to their lack in sufficient farm management skills e.g. natural resource management, production and infrastructural management etc. This is further exacerbated by poor support services directed at smallholder farmers e.g. financial services, technical support, access to transport and other support infrastructure."

Subsistent agriculture

The strategy reports that there is currently a lack of sufficient data regarding the subsistent sector and this sentiment is echoed in many other spheres, including academia and NGOs.

Reportedly, there are approximately 2.7 million black farming households in South Africa⁷ (including the small-scale producers mentioned above).

Production

"The largest component of agricultural production currently is animal products, with increasing importance of horticultural exports as a share of total agricultural output ... Variations in crop production are largely derived from the variability in maize production, which is in turn influenced by





climatic conditions, producers' willingness to plant, and industry average yields ... Farmers' willingness to produce, in turn, is influenced by the profitability of production, i.e. price offers, both domestically and internationally, and the suitability of the natural resource base. The trade-offs between these factors influence the affordability and availability of food.

Self-sufficiency levels are currently below domestic consumption requirements for most principled food commodities and are supplemented by increasing import levels. On average, agricultural production increased by 30% over the mentioned period, while the population increased by 32% ... Research conducted by South Africa's competition commission further suggests that an increase in anti-competitive behaviour, negatively impacts food productivity, food availability and affordability within the country. High food prices may therefore not be a function of low levels of production, climate change and profitability alone".

Contribution to the economy

"Share of GDP \approx 3% in 2005-2007 (down from 9.1% in 1965), but has some of the strongest backward, forward and employment multipliers in the economy. 8% of total employment is supplied by primary agriculture. It is however concerning that agriculture has lost 50% of its employment during 1970-95."

Equity in the sector

The agricultural sector continues to wrestle with entrenched inequalities despite the numerous government strategies and programmes implemented since 1995 with the intent of deracialising the sector via land and labour market reforms.

South African agriculture: policy and status quo in relation to small-scale producers

In the July 2014 budget vote speech, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Senzeni Zokwana declared that nearly R6.7 billion was committed to "accelerating the implementation of programmes as identified in the 2014/15 to 2018/19 Strategic Plan of the Department of Agriculture..." A primary aim of this plan is the "provision of comprehensive support to smallholder farmers by speeding up land reform and providing technical, infrastructural and financial support".⁸ In addition, the budget must contribute towards assisting subsistence farmers to increase food security levels. The minister highlighted that 1 million hectares of fallow land in rural areas must be planted and harvested. The department allocated the following amounts to these specific programmes, which aim to support small-scale and emerging producers:

- R1.861 billion, for CASP
- R460 million for the Ilima/Letsema programmes
- R67.8 million for LandCare.

Government has agreed on 12 outcomes as key areas of work and each of the 12 outcomes has a delivery agreement, which in most cases involves all spheres of government and a range of partners outside government. For example, **Outcome 7** aims to achieve "vibrant, equitable and sustainable rural communities". There are many departments involved, each having developed their own strategies to contribute towards this outcome. Contributing departments include the:

- DAFF

- Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
- Department of Public Works
- Department of Water Affairs
- Department of Trade and Industry
- Department of Social Development
- Department of Energy
- Employment Development Department
- Department of Higher Education and Training
- Department of Science and Technology.

Government perceives Outcome 7 as a “vehicle to fast track service delivery in rural areas” and is implemented through five outputs:

1. Sustainable agrarian reform with a thriving farming sector.
2. Improved access to affordable and diverse food.
3. Improved rural services to support livelihoods.
4. Improved employment and skills-development opportunities.
5. Enabling institutional environment for sustainable and inclusive growth.

DAFF is responsible for two other outcomes: 4 and 10, which are concerned with decent employment through inclusive growth, and protecting and enhancing environmental assets and natural resources, respectively.

The global economic meltdown of 2008 and the resultant food crisis that hit many countries caused many governments to reconsider the agricultural strategies they had in place. In the South African context, the agricultural strategy indicates that government has taken a hard look at the policies and programmes implemented since 1994 and the ramifications of these. The strategy displays a keen awareness of the effects of globalisation on agricultural practices and local food security.

It also points out that new technologies have resulted in farm consolidation, which has pushed out smaller enterprises unable to compete at economies of scale. It recognises the massive shedding of jobs in the sector as a major concern. It also notes that while the consolidation of farms has increased efficiencies in production and generated profitable returns, “per capita production is at an all time low” and food security needs are not

met. Last, the strategy notes the environmental challenges posed by industrial agriculture, such as soil pollution. A key objective of the strategy is to support small-scale producers to increase food security and to increase their stake in the agricultural economy. Despite this awareness of the issues within the sector and the many programmes designed to address these, very little transformation is indeed taking place. This paper discusses some of the reasons for this further below.

Below are some of the policies and strategies relevant to the realisation of agroecology in South Africa:

- Strategic Plan for the Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries 2014/15
- Agricultural Production Strategy 2011–2025
- Strategic Plan for Smallholder Support 2011–2014/15
- Policy on Agriculture in Sustainable Development
- Food and Nutrition Security Policy (Section 27 has raised concerns about lack of consultation and deficiencies in this policy. <http://section27.org.za/2015/02/call-for-wider-food-policy-consultation/>)
- Ocean Economy Strategy, Operation Phakisa and the fishing rights allocation process (FRAP)
- Preservation and Development of Agricultural Land Framework (PDALF)
- Climate Change Response White Paper
- Rural Development and Land Reform Green Paper
- Draft National Extension Policy
- Draft National Policy on Organic Production
- Draft National Agroecology Strategy
- Draft National Strategy on Indigenous Food
- Tlala food security initiative.

Many organisations working with small-scale producers have no doubt engaged with some of these programmes. It would be useful to share these experiences, challenges and successes, with a view to strengthening the food sovereignty movement through shared experience, learning and lobbying.



Strategic Plan for Smallholder Support (SPSS)

The SPSS appears to be a much more useful policy for us to engage with for realising agroecology than the draft Agroecology Policy (see below) because it focuses on creating a conducive environment for small-scale producers and has a significant budget allocation. (Two major critiques of the Agroecology Policy are that it fails to address transformation in the agriculture sector and its small budget is proof that it is a low priority.) The overall objective of the SPSS is to ensure development and support of 45 000 new small-scale producers across the country. The policy aims to decentralise support, moving away from “one size fits all” solutions, to engage with small-scale producers on their own territory. It lays out practical programmes with budget allocations and it explicitly recognises the role of agroecology in its plans.

According to the strategy, small-scale producers are those who “produce food for home consumption, as well as sell surplus produce to the market.” Small-scale producers have diverse sources of livelihood and are categorised by the strategy as follows⁹:

Smallholder producer type 1

Production is a part-time activity that forms a relatively small part of a multiple-livelihood strategy. More than 50% of this group lives in poverty.

Smallholder producer type 2

These small-scale producers operate roughly in the middle of the spectrum. This means that they rely on their agricultural enterprises to support themselves and they are not living in poverty. They need assistance in expanding production or making existing production more efficient or profitable, joining in value-addition activities and finding markets.

Smallholder producer type 3

These are small-scale producers who operate according to commercial norms, but who have not reached the threshold at which they are obliged to register for VAT or personal taxes.

The SPSS aims to “coordinate, align and avail all programmes that target support and

development of smallholder producers towards achieving optimum utilisation of resources for sustained food security and economic returns.”

It mentions agroecology explicitly as an appropriate methodology that must be promoted, however there is little evidence to date that this has indeed happened. It puts in place six mechanisms to achieve the objectives of the strategy:

1. Improved planning and investment co-ordination through area-based planning and identifying land suitable for subdivision.
2. Investment in skills: expand extension services, provide specialised training, and focus on conservation agriculture and agroecological agriculture, private sector and civil society partnerships.
3. Developing new approaches to partnerships: working with commodity organisations and identifying partners through area-based planning processes
4. Revising and refining infrastructure and mechanisation support programmes: CASP introduced in 2004, national mechanisation programme introduced in 2010/11, for example.
5. Scaling up scheme-based interventions: to affect groups of producers at the same time, commodity focus, delivered through public-private partnerships (usually developed on communal land).
6. Other support strategies: making the economic environment more conducive to small-scale production development, developing marketing infrastructure, improving information systems for technical and market information delivery, introducing procurement that favours small-scale producers, improving tenure security, broadening access to affordable inputs and providing support for cooperatives.

DAFF monitored the implementation of the strategy in the Overberg region in the Western Cape and found that funds were awarded predominantly to farmers falling into the third category, i.e. those that were better off and often already in partnerships with commercial



ventures.¹⁰ Monitoring of implementation of CASP reveals the same problem; this is expanded in more depth later in the paper. The poorest and most vulnerable farmers remain unsupported or supported by NGOs, who are themselves facing funding constraints and able to support only some groups. The support provided by NGOs has resulted in valuable work taking place across the country; this work needs to be brought together into a network of support, solidarity and political impact. Such networks of solidarity could spread the expertise that exists and more effectively lobby for a mutually beneficial relationship between civil society and government programmes to increase the quality and reach of support to the most vulnerable producers. How this relationship could be organised and the kind of proposals needed would still need to be teased out within the food sovereignty movement.

It does not deal with the issue of land except to ring fence communal land for development, rather than deal with the problem of land reform, without which agrarian reform and agroecology is impossible.

Draft Agroecology Strategy

While the political analysis of the agricultural sector in the National Agricultural Strategy and the Agricultural Production Strategy is encouraging, there is a lack of political understanding in government's Draft Agroecology Strategy. CSOs cite this as the primary flaw in the document.

The eighth and final draft of the strategy has been concluded and, according to the lead official on the draft policy Mr Kgomo Peterje, is ready to be finalised through Parliament in the near future.

A number of CSOs have engaged with the policy development (unfortunately most at a later stage) and they have found it to be



wholly inadequate. The Surplus People's Project (SPP) convened a number of workshops with small-scale farmers, farm workers, fisher folk and NGOs and noted that there is a lack of political understanding regarding the radical transformation needed in the agricultural sector to create equity, environmental health and ensure quality food for the nation. In other words, the notion of **food sovereignty** has not been understood and taken on board and this notion lies at the heart of agroecology.¹¹ CSOs noted that methodologies such as "conservation agriculture"ⁱ, which have been hijacked by Monsanto and others in recent years, have been explicitly mentioned as worthy of support. Indeed, a number of government documents consider agroecology and conservation agriculture as the same thing. CSOs also noted that the plan does not address the key issue of land and water access, which makes the policy a 'paper tiger'. In addition, the issue of gender is absent.

Mr. Peterje reported the lack of coherence and organisation in the food sovereignty movement as his primary challenge in developing the policy and NGOs raised this issue consistently themselves.¹² Developing a national Food Sovereignty Campaign is timely and urgent

i. Conservation agriculture is often associated with "no tillage" agriculture. According to the FAO, Conservation Agriculture (CA) is an approach to managing agro-ecosystems for improved and sustained productivity, increased profits and food security while preserving and enhancing the resource base and the environment. CA is characterized by three linked principles, namely:

- Continuous minimum mechanical soil disturbance.
- Permanent organic soil cover.
- Diversification of crop species grown in sequences and/or associations.

Monsanto has effectively marketed glyphosate (roundup) as an essential tool in no-till agriculture because ploughing usually assists with weed management, in its absence, roundup is extensively used and as such is considered to be a tool in the sustainable agriculture toolbox.

and it will undoubtedly help in organising us towards targeting the transformation of our unjust food system, especially as so much expertise is available within the movement.

National Strategy for Indigenous Food Crops

This strategy flows from the Indigenous Knowledge policy within the Department of Science and Technology and acknowledges that indigenous foods and farmers varieties are valuable resources in terms of nutrition, livelihoods and appropriate agriculture for small-scale producers. The strategy acknowledges that these resources have been “sent into exile” through the “continual promotion and adoption of exotic crops”¹³. It seeks to remedy this through research, financial mobilisation and policy interventions in order contribute significantly to food and nutritional security, as well as open up economic opportunity for a wider variety of producers and entrepreneurs than are currently participating in our food value-chains. It may be possible using the strategy to gain access to technical support, such as participatory breeding programmes for appropriate agroecology plant varieties and other resources and for agro-processing and the development of new products. The department has developed an awareness-creation strategy to create demand and markets.

However, in discussion with the lead government official on this policy, Ms Moloko Mojapelo,¹⁴ she notes that the budget and human capital allocation for the policy is relatively low (she did not give figures). However, she was extremely enthusiastic about CSO input and participation, especially from small-scale food producers.

Draft National Extension Policy

Extension work absorbs more than 50% of the provincial expenditure. While provincial agricultural departments had collective personnel budgets of approximately R3 billion in 2009/10, they employed only 2 200 extension officers, leaving them understaffed.

Despite this, 47 000 small-scale farmer households received one or more visits from

an extension officer in 2009/10. A total of R2.1 billion was spent averaging R44 000 per visit.¹⁵

It has been estimated that about 350 000 households receive R17 000 in the form of extension advice and other services, while 2.3 million farming households receive nothing.¹⁶ This highlights the trend of supporting a minority of emerging farmers.

Problems with extension services include that the reach into rural areas is limited and expertise on agroecology is low. In many instances, their services, with a historical background of providing industrial agriculture advice, actively undermine efforts to farm in an environmentally sound manner, for example, some farmers report being told they will no longer receive support or will be removed from incubator projects if they continue to refuse using chemicals.¹⁷

Government is well aware of the large expenditure on extension services, the limited impact and the low level of appropriate technical expertise. At the risk of sounding naive, this seems to present an opportunity to the agroecology movement in South Africa, which has a long reach into the poorest and most vulnerable communities and deep expertise to share with government extension officers. There would seem to be space to negotiate assisting in extension services as well as training extension officers on agroecological methods and the particularities of small-scale producers in various ecologies and socioeconomic circumstances. This could be done through formal training and providing extension officers with accreditation in agroecology principles and practices, as well as providing input into revising the general curriculum for extension workers.

The National Extension Policy is currently in its third draft. It was reportedly about to go to Parliament for approval in 2013 before being released for public comment.¹⁸ However, the process seems to have stalled and it is unclear where exactly it stands currently.

Draft Organic Policy

This policy has been in process for more than 10 years now and seems to have gone cold.



In the absence of any organic policy, organic produce is certified voluntarily in cooperation with suppliers and the various certifying bodies operating in the country. They use international standards to certify, with the exception of Afrisco, a local certifier, that has developed a set of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM)-accredited standards for local (and future international) certification. The labelling of organic products is subject to the Consumer Protection Act and the Advertising Standards Authority. The “protection” offered by these laws and regulations are in essence only in respect of misleading advertising.¹⁹

There is a fair amount of controversy regarding organic certification because the cost can make it prohibitive for resource-strapped small-scale producers producing organically – by default or design – to participate in these lucrative chains. While group certification and peer certification systems do exist (peer guaranteed systems), these still put extra expense and onerous administrative and management procedures onto farmers who are already operating under economically stressed circumstances. Procedures include the extensive recording of inputs and practices.

We need to ask if certification processes developed by IFOAM or based on IFOAM standards designed for sophisticated and often large-scale commercial organic producers are relevant for South African small-scale producers. In reality, we would like to see limited regulations placed on small producers throughout value chains, because currently, production and manufacture standards are set for industrial systems and can be wholly inappropriate as well as locking out small-scale producers.

There is an international trend towards shunning certification in favour of developing local economies that cut out intermediaries as much as possible and enabling relationships of trust and cooperation between producers and consumers. This replaces the need for certification.

It is possible that all of the above options will be useful for small-scale producers depending on what markets they are managing to gain

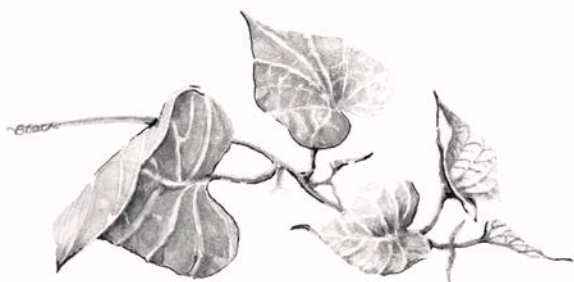


access to and what is required for each market. However, it does not seem that small-scale producers have participated in the organic policy debates to date in order to ensure that a localised system is tailored to their production and marketing needs. It may be useful to follow up with the process and give it new impetus.

There is also the irony that food produced with toxins is considered normal, while food produced naturally bears the burden of certification and labelling. This speaks to the skewed power relations and inequity characteristic of the sector where agribusiness has moulded policy to suit their needs. (This same argument is currently being made for genetically modified organisms (GMO) labelling in South Africa, where industry is insisting that those producing without GMOs should bear the burden of labelling. Industry claims that labelling industrially produced and GM foods will increase the price while labelling organic and GM-free can give elite consumers the choice they're calling for and they can afford the price.)²⁰

Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP)

As mentioned earlier, CASP was allocated R1.86 billion in the 2014 budget vote. Launched in 2004, it aimed to create “a comprehensive approach to changing and providing an enabling environment in which smallholder and subsistence farmers could develop into viable commercial enterprises”.²¹



It was initially conceptualised as a conditional grant for beneficiaries of land reform and therefore the guidelines state that 70% of funds must be allocated to land reform beneficiaries and the remaining 30% to “other agrarian reform beneficiaries”, i.e. those who already have some access to land, most likely people already living and farming at some level in communal areas of the former Bantustans.²² It is therefore aligned with the Land Reform Agricultural Development programme that explicitly aims to create commercial farmers. The underpinning principle of development espoused by government is the commodity and value-chain approach.

The presumption that land reform is a sphere of potential “commercial viability” while communal areas are for “food security” is put forward by agricultural officials as rationale for prioritising the former. They acknowledge that their own criteria for assessing business plans set ‘commercial viability’ as a precondition for approving funds.²³ This means that it excludes those who are farming on communal land or outside of the land-reform programme. What they may be able to access is “food security” assistance, generally in the form of starter packs of seeds and inputs, which are most likely to be improved corporate seed and chemical inputs.

While there are six “pillars”ⁱⁱ for which funding can be made available, CASP has become synonymous with the provision of infrastructure, particularly for those with some kind of secure land tenure. The other pillars have largely been neglected and a 2008 survey commissioned by DAFF found that

“good progress was made in some areas, such as sustainable resource management, while other areas, such as equitable access and participation, still required urgent attention”.²⁴

A paper published by PLAAS in 2010 pinpoints some of the challenges and weak points of CASP. PLAAS found that CASP funding is²⁵:

- Excessively channelled into land-reform projects (which need a dramatic design overhaul, in the absence of which CASP support to them will continue to be a case of “throwing good money after bad”).
- Excessively oriented to support individual farmers.
- Dependent on an extension service that is itself equipped to serve only few small-scale farmers and cannot be feasibly scaled up.

Of great concern was the massive support for economically viable ventures with no requirement for farmers to contribute anything; CASP “is offering up to 100% grants to commercial ventures — rather than providing partial subsidies and leveraging commercial farmers’ own resources — while often providing 0% to subsistence producers”²⁶. There are also no caps on allocations, for example, a project with 12 members received R10.8 million for a poultry project. In interviews for the PLAAS research, government officials were frank about their directive to spend their large budgets and therefore the favour displayed towards larger and few projects instead of trying to service many small projects. They were also frank about political favouritism²⁷.

For the most part, those with secure land tenure and viable business plans receive support while farmers on communal land tend to fall under the food security policy. One of the reasons for this is because CASP focuses on supplying on-farm infrastructure.

Those acquiring leases on state-owned land through the proactive land acquisition strategy (PLAS) also battle to get loans from the government-sponsored Micro Agricultural Financial Institutions of South Africa (MAFISA). This institution requires that, for a standard

ii. On and off-farm infrastructure; information and knowledge management; training and capacity building; technical and advisory services; financing mechanisms; and marketing and business development.



five-year loan, the applicant must have security of tenure for five years — whereas under the PLAS scheme, the farmer only gets a lease agreement for three years; as a result, MAFISA rejects their applications. Many people have been allocated land through PLAS, but are unable to buy livestock because they are not eligible for state support (either MAFISA loans or CASP grants) and they are considered to have inadequate tenure for collateral purposes.

PLAAS recommends “the only way out of the impasse would appear to be to use existing resources more effectively. In respect of CASP, there is an urgent need to shift the emphasis of support from on-farm infrastructure and inputs, to community-level infrastructure, market development and institutional re-engineering. The current model of funding, which focuses on one-on-one assistance at ‘project’ level, has limited impact, cannot feasibly be scaled up, and does not lend itself towards indivisible public goods and regulation, which are effective ways of benefiting large numbers of producers, and which are among the key forms of support used in the past to develop the white farming sector. As for refashioning extension services, this is the larger challenge: it will require above all experimenting with models that have the potential to greatly stretch the reach of our limited number of extension officers²⁸.”

Associated programmes, Ilima/Letsema and Landcare also have substantial budgets, which are not used effectively and equitably.

The Ilima-Letsema programme focuses on increasing food production and rehabilitating irrigation schemes and other value-adding projects, while Landcare aims to reduce and manage risks such as erosion, overgrazing, bush encroachment, alien plant infestations and soil nutritional deficiencies as a means to ensuring healthy land for food production.

Government feedback on these programmes has listed many delivery challenges. These include a lack of detailed plans on the duration of project support, proper exit strategies and difficulties regarding procurement procedures.²⁹

Another programme worth mentioning and that needs CSO critique is MAFISA. This is a government-supported financial scheme that provides financial services to small-scale farmers, growers and fishers. People access MAFISA through a network of intermediaries, which includes public and private institutions. Each intermediary has been allocated funds depending on the capacity of that intermediary. Government-owned entities’ funding is capped at R100 million and privately owned entities’ funding is capped at R50 million. Intermediaries must register with the national credit regulator to participate and charge 8% per annum for interest, keeping 7% as payment for their services.³⁰

A big problem with MAFISA is that land tenure is required for access to these loans and this does not serve those most in need. At least one intermediary has threatened to withdraw so far due to inability to collect payment.

Recommendations

There is an incredible amount of support in policy documents for small-scale farmers indicating that government, at least on a theoretical level, understands the plight of small producers and that they need different kinds of support to large-scale producers. It is also obvious that government recognises the weaknesses in our current agricultural system and related food chains. There is the start of a discourse around agroecology, but the concept has not been grasped well and is often conflated with “conservation agriculture”. There are also budgets allocated to realise these policy aspirations; however, the implementation and impact does not materialise on the ground.

This document has not really touched the issue of land reform, the complexities of which were beyond the scope of this policy scan. Obviously we need to address this issue within the Food Sovereignty Movement and many organisations have been working tirelessly on it for the last 20 years. Without land reform and secure land tenure small scale farmers will not be able to invest in infrastructure or gain



the necessary financial support to do so. A lot of work has also been done with regards to municipal and communal land, issues related to farm dwellers and in many instances people are occupying land and producing food and are at great risk from authorities.

The complexity of delivering on the policy to millions of small-scale farmers has led to government spending the budgets on bigger commercially viable projects and leaving the majority of farming households with no support whatsoever. There is also a lack of expertise within relevant government structures around small-scale producers, their systems and needs, particularly those using alternative production techniques. Government support tends to destroy agroecological initiatives in this regard when imposing their top-down and uninformed solutions. In addition, the agroecology movement is highly fragmented – this problem rests in our hands.

Forming a Food Sovereignty Movement would enable us to:

- Support one another in the many struggles related to food sovereignty, be they for better living conditions for farmworkers, around allocation of fishing rights, the struggles for land and finance or the fight against the spread of new mining initiatives.
- Share experiences – undoubtedly many organisations have had experience with the programmes mentioned in this document. It would be extremely useful to share experiences of success and to critique and lobby government for much better delivery.
- Strategically prioritise joint actions towards the realisation of agroecology and food security in the long term.
- Assist government in that the agroecology movement has great reach into deep rural areas and has deep knowledge and experience in areas where government lacks capacity. A unified movement would be in a better position to design solutions to contribute to Food Sovereignty in South Africa.



Annex 1: Agroecology on the ground in South Africa

There is deep skill, knowledge and expertise in South Africa on agroecological production methods; some are mentioned below. The task of institutionalising agroecology and fulfilling the complex criteria depicted in the opening graphic remains largely an aspiration for us at this point – the security of tenure, widespread extension support, appropriate breeding programmes and product development, appropriate markets, and so on, which would ensure that small-scale farmers could have quality livelihoods and autonomy while operating in an equitable food system that produces nutritious food, which is available to the poor.

It would seem that all the building blocks are there – including long reach into communities and continued training and support, work on seed saving and revival of indigenous knowledge, research, documentation and advocacy, on-farm processing, curriculum development, public awareness and more. These activities are happening in NGO projects and academia, small commercial ventures and

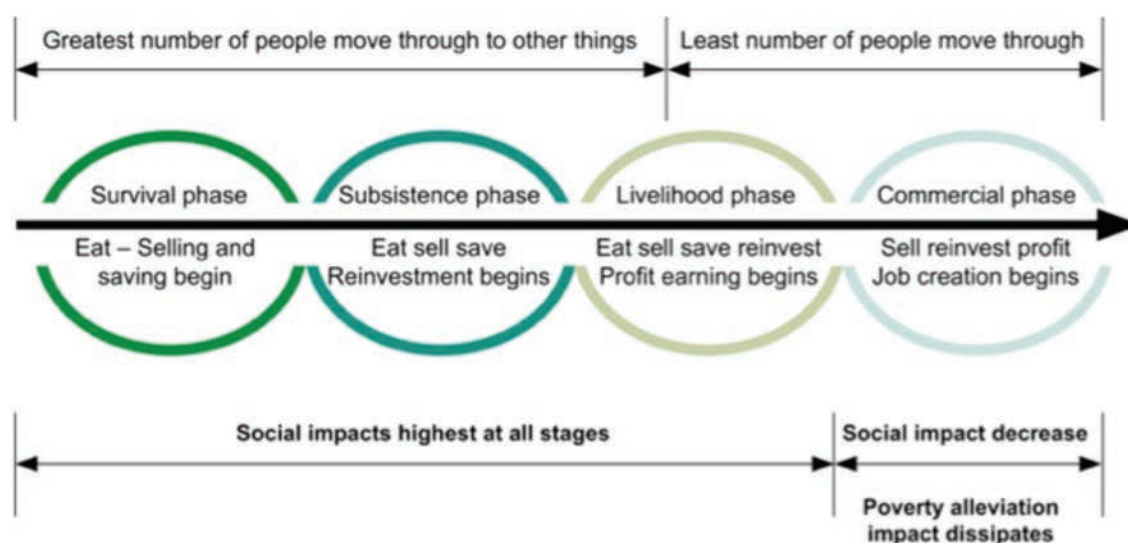
the “foodie movement”, among others. The following successful projects and initiatives act as examples of these activities.

Abalimi Bezekhaya and Harvest of Hope

Abalimi Bezekhaya supports about 3 650 micro-farmers across the Cape Flats, Cape Town, where the climate and environment are notoriously harsh for vegetable production. The organisation provides training, permanent mentorship, subsidised/free inputs through its garden centres, and guaranteed markets for those that are able to sell surplus. Gardeners can purchase subsidised inputs and gain advice and peer interaction at its garden centres in Khayelitsha and Nyanga. Some 3 500 clients were serviced by these two centres in 2012.

The organisation takes a differentiated approach to the farmers that they serve noting that some farmers operate on a subsistence level, while others engage in successful commercial production. This recognition that farmers along the spectrum need different kind of support is key to the success of the project (see figure 2 below). The others keys to success are guaranteeing markets at fair prices, shortening the value chain and building entrepreneurial skills at the right time in each farmer’s developmental cycle.

Figure 2: The sustainable development continuum for organic micro-farming projects



Source: Rob Small, Abalimi Bezekhaya

The first two involve creating demand through the weekly sale of pre-ordered and paid for organic veggie boxes. A visit to the Harvest of Hope packaging house that packages the produce from 51 gardens reveals the mind-boggling planning and co-ordination involved.

This approach has helped to build more sustainable farming businesses, making them less vulnerable to collapse should the support of the NGO disappear. However, founder Rob Small is adamant that all farmers need at least a R100 subsidy per month for success, noting that commercial farmers are subsidised through special water and electricity rates. The graphic below illustrates the four stages of the continuum used to assess the kind of support needed at any given time: survival, subsistence, livelihood and commercial. Abalimi Bezekhaya bought produce worth R501 220 from participating micro-farmers in 2012.

The organisation chooses to sell to a guaranteed market that provides premium prices in order to bring the most money possible into the local economy, as opposed to selling the organic produce to the local community, which could increase its nutritional security. Some might argue that this is at odds with the food sovereignty principle where the working class produces food by and for itself. This is one of the many debates still to be had in our emerging food sovereignty movement

regarding the underlying values and principles and the possible solutions that could suit each farmer or collective in their unique situations.

Abalimi Bezekhaya served as the inspiration for the Siyavuna project in KwaZulu-Natal, described further below.

Siyavuna Abalimi Development Centre

Siyavuna, operating in the Ugu district of KwaZulu-Natal, trains and mentors emerging organic farmers with the aim of bolstering food security, helping to develop livelihoods and enhancing local economies. It works with farmers from 10 rural communities and supports micro-enterprises through farmers' associations and cooperatives that market under a brand called Kumnandi. Its organic produce is certified through a participatory guarantee system.

Participating farmers deliver their goods each week to a cooperative-established collection point that is within walking distance of the farms. Farmers are paid cash for their produce.

Local farmers from each community are elected to act as field workers by the cooperatives to assist at collection points and sit on the boards of the cooperatives.

Siyavuna recognises that farmers face twin challenges: developing their production

Image 1: Food production in the Cape Flats



Source: www.abalimi.org.za

Image 2: Siyavuna cooperatives



Source: www.siyavuna.org.za

systems to create a surplus and the need for entrepreneurial and business management skills. It provides training and mentorship on sustainable production methods as well as entrepreneurial skills and it links farmers to guaranteed markets where they can cut their teeth. As at Abalimi Bezekhaya, the organisation tailors assistance to the farmer's level of development. Of 320 participating farmers, it has selected 31 farmers as advanced farmers who have expressed their desire to produce on a larger scale. They will receive additional training and support.

Biowatch South Africa

Biowatch engages in research and advocacy work, as well as running programmes with small-scale farmers in five project sites in KwaZulu-Natal. It services some 25 projects in the following areas:

- Tshaneni
- Pongola
- Mtubatuba
- KwaNgwanase
- Ingwavuma.

Biowatch defines agroecology as the sustainable alternative to industrial monoculture farming systems and as a system that adapts to local conditions, uses low levels of inputs and is inexpensive, and works in harmony with nature. This method of farming preserves biodiversity, and often enhances it. It results in healthy, nutritious and GM-free food. It can be practiced on both small and large

farms. It builds on traditional knowledge and practices, and values people and their culture. Importantly, it is more than a production method. It is also a thriving social movement that ensures that farmers are in control of most aspects of their food production with justice for people and planet at its heart.

Biowatch spearheads work on seed saving in the country with great success in the communities within which they operate. Their definition of a seed bank as a “dynamic system of exchange rather than a structure” has shaped the way they work with farmers at household and community levels, with a focus on increasing diversity of seed at household level and exchange and distribution at community level. It sets “diversity targets” for households as membership criteria encouraging households that want to join to plant a diversity of crops.

The Seed Knowledge Initiative (SKI) is a partnership between Biowatch South Africa, The Mupo Foundation and the National Research Foundation Bio-economy Research Chair and Environmental Evaluation Unit at the University of Cape Town. SKI researches, documents and creates platforms for experiential learning between farmers to create “local and regional communities of practice around agro-ecology and seed saving and exchange and to shift policy as well as scientific discourse on agriculture.”³¹

Image 3: Biowatch: fresh, healthy produce at local markets



Source: www.biowatch.org.za

Ithemba Projects

“Sometimes success is not about the garden, but a range of other things, like making genuine caring relationships.”³²

Karabo Rajuili, ex-Project Manager at Ithemba Projects gave a very impassioned interview about their activities. Ithemba Projects services the community of Sweetwaters in northern KwaZulu-Natal, focusing particularly on the wellbeing of the children, life skills and education. Many children are malnourished in the region, with alarming levels of stunting. Ithemba is keenly aware how this affects children’s behaviour, development and educational achievement. Additionally, there had been little education in the area related to the environmental care, evidenced by the widespread environmental degradation.

In response, Ithemba began a gardening project, based on permaculture principles, in nine crèches and five primary schools. It chose permaculture as a production system because it relies on local resources, has the least negative impact on the environment and is a sustainable model for school settings. Importantly, diverse cropping and an ecosystem

approach provide vegetables, herbs and fruit trees, producing a wide array of vitamins and nutrients. The key goal was to improve nutrition. “A lot of work went into how to reach that goal.”³³ The quality of fruit and vegetables in the area is generally poor because most produce is imported, if available at all.

Another key goal for the project was to ensure longevity and ownership within the schools and the community so that the gardens would continue when the project was completed. The community had a great deal of scepticism towards these types of projects due to the historic experience of short-lived projects initiated by outsiders who subsequently left. The organisation provided permaculture training; infrastructure, such as fencing; a person to work in the garden; and importantly sought out a teacher with passion to work with; “the right person”. Ithemba consulted with the schools about all of these aspects. A mentor from the community was trained to support the school and crèche gardens on a weekly basis and this mentor remained as a kind of extension worker after the Ithemba project concluded. The mentor was “from [the] community, not an outsider and someone teachers could relate to. Sometimes

Image 4: Ithemba is all about the children



Source: Ithemba Projects facebook

success is not about the garden, but a range of other things, like making genuine caring relationships.”

The production varies from school to school, but there have been some exciting innovations. For example, Nomvando Primary School, which caters for about 700 children, decided to sell their produce to the local feeding scheme thus generating an income. They contributed at least 30% of the food for the scheme and provided fresh diverse food for the children. In the crèches, they found they were producing more than enough vegetables for the school and sold the surplus for income.

The crèches led this innovation and have become viable and sustainable initiatives. The school also runs a seed-saving programme with differing levels of success across the schools.

Community members, including children, ranked their increased knowledge of nutrition highly as one of the benefits of the project. Ithemba discovered that children were taking their new knowledge back home and many were tending home gardens and teaching their families about nutrition. In addition, the gardens are used to teach life skills and raise awareness about environmental sustainability.

Ithemba is all about nurturing the next generation.

Government programmes hinder their efforts because its various agricultural programmes targeted at schools have a different approach making it important that principals are educated around agroecology so that they can approve or decline each programme – for example, an offer of free maize seed. The organisation was also unsuccessful in accessing government funds as “government resources support successful (commercially viable) projects.”

Ithemba also tried to link up with CEDARA College for technical support, but the college’s approach with chemicals created confusion within the projects.

Enaleni Farm

Enaleni Farm is a private agroecological farm with a passionate focus on indigenous crops and livestock. Owner Richard Haigh is an international Slow Food “Presidium”, a title bestowed on those who are reviving and stewarding endangered indigenous food-related resources. He explained the workings of the farm, his passions and challenges in an interview.

Image 5 Entrance to Enaleni



Source: Haidee Swanby

Image 6 Award-winning heritage beans



Source: Haidee Swanby

His speciality is the endangered Zulu sheep, which are “are remarkable in that they have a high tolerance to tick-borne diseases and parasites. They have co-evolved within a hot, pest-ridden landscape with inconsistent weather patterns and temperatures, and in some coastal areas with high humidity”. However, they have been “overlooked and displaced by corporate agriculture”. Enaleni is dedicated to keeping them from extinction, while promoting these low-input agricultural resources and creating awareness and consumer appreciation.

While Enaleni is a working farm, it also serves as a model for integrated indigenous agriculture and is one of the most established and advanced such models in the country. It is open to public visits and offers a small amount of training. It is only beginning to turn a modest profit now after a decade of operations and this has taken a massive amount of technical expertise, innovation, passion and incredibly hard work. One of the reasons it has taken so long is because the land first needed to be cleared of alien vegetation and then slowly built up using an agroecological approach, which requires high levels of financial and knowledge resources, along with the need to employ a multitude of strategies.

Enaleni focuses primarily on livestock – the Zulu sheep already mentioned, traditional Nguni cattle, Colsbrook pigs and a range of poultry, including turkeys and Venda chickens.

Cropping, with an emphasis on indigenous and farmer varieties, is mostly for household consumption and for feed for the animals.

A fair amount of on-farm processing takes place, such as feta cheese production from the sheep and grain threshing and milling. Surplus is sold at a local market. In addition, Enaleni produces orchids for sale, runs a guesthouse and holds events, such as restaurant days.

This myriad of activities enables a livelihood.

The farm also works with 60 primary and secondary teachers linking health, environment and eating habits. The programme looks at production systems and educates on how to make better food choices, but it also focuses on aroma and texture of food, i.e. the joy of food.

Richard’s passion is for his animals. Compassion is central to the way he raises and slaughters the animals. He notes that, for example, breeders have never tampered with the pigs and that they have accumulated high levels of fat and are fecund.

While according to Richard most breeds are ‘prophets in someone else’s land’, the indigenous sheep have a long African history. Richard notes that they are hardy and commercially viable on a local level.

His beautiful Nguni cattle are registered at a steep cost. The livestock sector is generally not in favour of small-scale production, promoting

Image 7: Indigenous Zulu sheep: rare and hardy



Source: www.enalenifarm.co.za

rather economies of scale. For example, in Richard's experience, pig abattoirs dictate terms to small farmers, favouring, of course, business for large-scale producers who often keep animals in inhumane conditions. In addition, animals kept on large-scale farms have to be transported long distances to the abattoirs, which are centralised and can suffer having no food for days. He prefers to skip the abattoirs and slaughter on farm, package and sell directly to customers who put in orders for pork at market days or online. Major costs for the farm include electricity, which is more expensive than town rates, and water, which has almost doubled in cost over the past year, along with animal feed, grain, diesel and labour. This makes it very expensive to feed, water and care for 100 sheep, 25 cows, 50 pigs, an assortment of poultry and a donkey.

Richard notes that in the current paradigm there are no incentives to care for the land or use it appropriately. In fact doing this puts the farmer at a disadvantage because of the lack of support. Government has been unable to give him technical support as there is no capacity to deal with a farm such as his – in fact, he has been asked to give extension workers training on dealing with Nguni cattle. He had hoped for assistance with making silage for his animals, but has not found this expertise within government structures. However, he has found it useful to join agricultural associations, such as the Poultry Association, which has proved to be a source of learning and sharing. What

government has assisted with to date has been the use of their “tree popper” under a DAFF initiative to remove alien vegetation.

Enaleni had to create their entire farming system and livelihood essentially from scratch – from sourcing quality indigenous animals and seed, creating an ecological production system, doing on-farm processing and developing and maintaining a market and clientele. All this in an environment where economies of scale are encouraged and technical support is lacking. How will resource-poor farmers manage this feat alone?

John Nzira – Ukuvuna Farm

Ukuvuna Farm, based in Midrand Gauteng, provides agroecological training in rural and urban communities, schools and clinics, as well as selling farm products and installing solar energy systems. A visit to his farm is an inspiring occasion and he took time to explain their activities. They provide GM-free maize seeds to small farmers and home gardeners in Gauteng and maintain heritage seeds for improving nutrition and protecting the erosion of open-pollinated and pure-bred crop varieties. Protecting and acknowledging indigenous knowledge systems is for them the key for future food sovereignty.

John Nzira runs Ukuvuna Farming on one hectare in Midrand, where diversity, not only in his agricultural system, but also in terms

Image 8: Diverse cropping and economic strategies in an integrated permaculture design at Ukuvuna



Source: Haidee Swanby

of livelihood creation, is vital for success. Like Richard Haigh, John is a master farmer and is doing what he loves. The level of knowledge and experience these two men have is testament to the knowledge-intensive character of agroecology. The entire hectare is designed as one system, in true permaculture fashion, with each sub-system feeding into and supporting another. For example, every drop of municipal water that comes onto the property stays there – with grey water from washing feeding into the garden and even black sewerage is treated through natural filters to nourish the orchard. At any given time

of year there is something coming out of the farm to sell, from earthworms and compost, to honey, fresh produce, heritage seed and more. Production is first for home consumption and nutrition with the surplus for sale.

Ukuvuna works with the Mupo Foundation in Limpopo and closely with Biowatch in the SKI project, as well as in the region. Within the SKI project, they collaborate with the University of Zambia and the Kasisi Agricultural Centre to document traditional seed. In Limpopo, John trained communities to develop tree nurseries by collecting seed from the forest, propagating

Image 9: Markets at Tyisa Nabanye



Source: Facebook

and selling. The community earned R25 000 from this endeavour in February 2014. This raises awareness of the value of local resources and incentivises communities to care for them – during the programme, communities also planted trees to rehabilitate wetlands and degraded environments, which are at risk from extensive timber plantations and other industrial activities. About 30 people in the community were trained to save traditional seed and they find great value in the increased yield and diversity these seeds bring.

According to John, “government has funds but doesn’t know how to use them.” He feels that they could play a greater role in supporting responsible and socially just production and that providing assistance around identifying niche crops and agro-processing activities and assisting with market development would be particularly useful.

The “foodie movement” and the youth

There has been a marked rise of gourmet markets and interest in artisanal foods, even foraging. The Oranjezicht market in Cape Town is an example of farmers’ markets moving into the cities and there are a number of

restaurants now serving foods foraged from the local surrounds, with colourful names like Sardines and Toast and Foliage. Without a doubt, the “foodie/gourmet” movement is opening up market space and creating a new discourse that is appreciative of small producers and artisanal producers, wholesome and natural food and heritage recipes.

The Slowfood Youth Network in South Africa straddles these gourmet trends with project work in the Western Cape. It interacts with a global movement on food and food rights issues, networks with projects dedicated to sustainable and ethical food production and hosts events aimed at the youth. One of the Slowfood Youth community projects Tyisa Nabanye aims to “constantly involve more and more youth in farming activities, using music and art as an alternative method of drawing them to the fields. Founded in 2013, the project has actually brought together about 70 young people who managed to find space for the artistic project in the discharged Oranjezicht military base (Cape Town), which was made available thanks to the local administration. The group is very active: they organize periodic markets and workshops with volunteers, create crowdfunding campaigns and publish photos

and articles on their Facebook page.”³⁴ The organisation notes that many children in the city do not have access to healthy inexpensive food.

The “kids in the vegetable garden grow numerous products: from spinach and celery, to coriander and thyme, along with many other types of local South African produce, even a lemon tree!” It also spreads awareness concerning the themes of diet and farming education and offers spaces and training to launch cultivation, even on roofs and balconies in Cape Town.

The Slowfood Youth network provides an opportunity to network with youth around the world that share this same passion and introduces them to the global politics of food and activism. It also plans events in collaboration with network members to spread awareness and action.

Transitioning to agroecology

In an agricultural landscape dominated by large-scale industrial agriculture and a highly concentrated food system, success stories from small producers are impressive regardless of their production system. Although ultimately the goal is to transform our production methods to ones that do not pollute and erode ecological systems and our health, it is worthwhile noticing and commending small-scale producers that are managing to make it in this hostile environment. Many of their problems as small players echo those of agroecological producers. Small scale farmers in the Phillipi Area have successfully supplied Cape Town with fresh produce for many years, mostly using agrichemicals. Activists farming in the area have been engaged in an ongoing struggle to retain their land for agriculture as pressure to rezone it for housing has mounted.

Phillipi Horticultural Area (PHA)

The PHA has a fascinating, long and rich history as agricultural land that dates back to the mid-1800s. The land, designated as rural, is located in the urban setting of the Cape Flats and surrounded by poor communities. The land and culture have weathered many pressures and changes, but in recent times there has been

extreme pressure to rezone the agricultural land for development purposes in a province with an estimated housing backlog of about 400 000 houses³⁵ A bitter battle has ensued between the City of Cape Town and farmers to keep this prime urban agricultural land for food production.

According to the City of Cape Town’s Spatial Planning Committee, the Phillipi Horticultural Area is a critical resource in Cape Town due to its exceptional horticultural production, which is linked to unique local climatic and water availability conditions and its role in contributing to securing affordable food, which is becoming increasingly important, as well as holding potential for long-term water supply in Cape Town. The labour-intensive horticultural sector is currently a major employer of especially lower-skilled workers. Currently 2 350–3 760 people are employed (varying seasonably), and this has the potential to grow as more horticultural land becomes available after mining operations are completed. The impact of climate change on food production, and fuel security on the affordability of food, heightens the value of the PHA to the City’s food security”.³⁶

In addition, the PHA boasts a sophisticated value chain with “seedling suppliers, input suppliers such as fertiliser, infrastructure suppliers and suppliers such as compost producers; food chain interventions such as beneficiation, wholesalers and packhouses.”³⁷

The area produces well over 50 different horticultural crops, with many farmers also active in livestock production. It is estimated that just under 100 000 tonnes of fresh produce is grown in the PHA annually – this includes an estimated figure of over 2 000 tonnes of produce that is given free to farm workers each year.³⁸

However, initial rezoning plans did not look at the PHA through a food lens, and painted the area as run down, with farmers looking to sell as soon as decent prices become available. For a number of years, it looked as if this “food basket of Cape Town” would be lost to private housing developments, had it not been for a fierce fight by the Save the PHA Campaign. The City turned down an application in January



2014 by MSP Developments for a proposal to rezone the and earmark it for urban development.³⁹ Although this is a significant victory, activists note several other threats on the horizon and that the area will continue to be under pressure as developers seek to exploit its economic potential.

It is shocking that arable land that is being productively used and creating employment should be under threat in a city where 80% of poorer households are food insecureⁱⁱⁱ. Instead of rezoning the area due to a perceived lack

of success by farmers, “the Departments of Agriculture and Rural Development need to be engaged and called on their lack of support for the farmers within the area”.⁴⁰ While production in the PHA is based primarily on chemicals and external inputs, there are new groups of farmers that are excited to implement environmentally sound practices. Farmers trained through Abalimi Bezekhaya, for example, are keen to gain land in the PHA and benefit from the markets and many services available in the area.

iii. For example according to the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) 89% of households in Khayelitsha are categorised as food insecure. Battersby, J. 2011. The State of Urban Food Insecurity in Cape Town. AFSUN. http://www.afsun.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/AFSUN_11.pdf



References

1. African Centre for Biosafety 2014. National Right to Food Dialogue report. Unpublished. Available on request. www.acbio.org.za
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Hall, R. & Aliber, M. 2010. *The Case for Re-Strategising Spending Priorities to Support Small Scale Farmers in South Africa*. Plaas. Working Paper 17. <http://dspace.africaportal.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/33529/1/WP17.pdf?1>.
5. International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development. 2009. *Synthesis, Global and Regional Reports*. Island Press, Washington, DC. http://www.unep.org/dewa/agassessment/reports/IASTD/EN/Agriculture%20at%20a%20Crossroads_Synthesis%20Report%20%28English%29.pdf
6. Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (2011) *South African Agricultural Production Strategy 2011 – 2025*. http://www.daff.gov.za/doaDev/doc/IGDP/AGRIC_PRODUCTION_STRATEGY_FRAMWK.pdf
7. Hall, R. & Aliber, M. 2010. *The Case for Re-Strategising Spending Priorities to Support Small Scale Farmers in South Africa*. Plaas. Working Paper 17. <http://dspace.africaportal.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/33529/1/WP17.pdf?1>.
8. Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries 2014. *Agriculture Budget Vote Speech 2014*. <http://www.daff.gov.za/docs/speeches/2014%20-%20%20MINISTER%20BUDGET%20VOTE%20FINAL%2016%20July%202014.pdf>
9. De Satge, R. 2013. *Overberg smallholder agriculture*. A Phuhlisani scan for the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. https://prezi.com/kaxbpmlg9anb/overberg-smallholder-agriculture/?auth_key=7dc39df1839915269ee3d6c6e18obfc34d11ode6
10. De Satge, R. 2013. *Overberg smallholder agriculture*. A Phuhlisani scan for the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. https://prezi.com/kaxbpmlg9anb/overberg-smallholder-agriculture/?auth_key=7dc39df1839915269ee3d6c6e18obfc34d11ode6
11. Civil Society Statement on the Draft National Agroecology Strategy. Surplus People's Project. https://www.google.co.za/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&rlz=1C1LENN_enZA573ZA573&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=civil%20society%20statement%20agroecology
12. Personal correspondence, Mr Peterje Kgomo. July 2014, Pretoria
13. DAFF. April 2014. National Strategy for Indigenous Food Crops. Discussion Document. Draft 6.
14. Personal communication, Moloko Mojapelo. August 2015, Cape Town
15. Aliber, M & Hall, R. *Support for smallholder farmers in South Africa: Challenges of scale and strategy*. <http://www.hsrc.ac.za/uploads/pageContent/2950/DSASpecialIssueALIBER.pdf>
16. Hall, R. & Aliber, M. 2010. *The Case for Re-Strategising Spending Priorities to Support Small Scale Farmers in South Africa*. Plaas. Working Paper 17. <http://dspace.africaportal.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/33529/1/WP17.pdf?1>.
17. Personal correspondence, ESAFF South Africa.
18. National Extension Policy Website <http://www.extensionpolicy.za.net/>
19. SAOSO <http://www.saoso.org/Organic-Standards.php> (the draft policy is also available here)
20. For example, see ACB's "Industry employs bullying tactics to scupper GM labelling". <http://www.acbio.org.za/index.php/media/64-media-releases/464-industry-employing-bullying-tactics-to-scupper-gm-food-labelling-in-south-africa>
21. Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (2011) *South African Agricultural Production Strategy 2011 – 2025*. http://www.daff.gov.za/doaDev/doc/IGDP/AGRIC_PRODUCTION_STRATEGY_FRAMWK.pdf
22. NDA (National Department of Agriculture) (2007a) Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP): Background on CASP. Presented at the National Review Meeting, Pretoria, 20 February 2007. Pretoria: NDA.
23. Hall, R. & Aliber, M. 2010. *The Case for Re-Strategising Spending Priorities to Support Small Scale Farmers in South Africa*. Plaas. Working Paper 17. <http://dspace.africaportal.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/33529/1/WP17.pdf?1>.
24. Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (2011) *South African Agricultural Production Strategy 2011 – 2025*. http://www.daff.gov.za/doaDev/doc/IGDP/AGRIC_PRODUCTION_STRATEGY_FRAMWK.pdf
25. Hall, R. & Aliber, M. 2010. *The Case for Re-Strategising Spending Priorities to Support Small Scale Farmers in South Africa*. Plaas. Working Paper 17. <http://dspace.africaportal.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/33529/1/WP17.pdf?1>.
26. ibid
27. ibid
28. ibid
29. Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme, MAFISA, Ilima-Letsema, Landcare & new programmes: Department of Agriculture briefings. <https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/14636/>
30. The portfolio committee on agriculture, forestry and fisheries 07 august 2012. <https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/14636/>
31. Biowatch south africa
32. Karabo Rajuli. Ex project manager Ithemba



33. Karabo Rajuili
34. Slowfood Foundation January 2015. *A local revolution*. http://www.slowfoodfoundation.com/pagine/eng/news/dettaglio_news.lasso?-idn=347#.VNmuqfmUf77
35. Battersby-Lennard, J & Haysom, G. 2012. Philippi Horticultural Area A City asset or potential development node? http://www.sustainabilityinstitute.net/newsdocs/document-downloads/doc_download/569-philippi-horticultural-area-final-report.
36. City of Cape Town Report to economic, environment & spatial planning committee EESP13031012 the role of the philippi horticultural area in securing the future of the city. 13.10.12
37. Battersby-Lennard, J & Haysom, G. 2012. Philippi Horticultural Area A City asset or potential development node? http://www.sustainabilityinstitute.net/newsdocs/document-downloads/doc_download/569-philippi-horticultural-area-final-report.
38. Ibid.
39. Urban Africa Net. 14.02.14. <http://www.urbanafrica.net/urban-voices/fight-philippi/>
40. Battersby-Lennard, J & Haysom, G. 2012. Philippi Horticultural Area A City asset or potential development node? http://www.sustainabilityinstitute.net/newsdocs/document-downloads/doc_download/569-philippi-horticultural-area-final-report.





PO Box 29170, Melville 2109, South Africa
www.acbio.org.za