

## Notes for presentation to SAFCEI FLEAT workshop – just transition in Eastern and Southern African food systems

Kempton Park, 18 July 2024

[slide 2]

### Overview of presentation

What do we mean by a just transition?

Ecological sustainability

Social justice and redress

Economic inclusion and democratisation

[slide 3]

### What do we mean by just transition?

Just = justice, transition = change from one state to another

Justice – **winners and losers in transitions** – ensure that some – especially most marginal - don't carry the cost of transition that benefits others – must be fair, must consider historical situation e.g. who created the problem, who has borne the cost of state of affairs to date, **how can we secure a 'double transition'**? – both ecological sustainability and social redress in the same movement

Term being widely used now – got to be careful

**'Just' aspect** – in SA being reduced to ensuring that unionised workers don't lose their jobs as efforts are made to mitigate climate impacts – important, but narrow – must widen to include other actors, more comprehensive, **systemic transition** – ultimately away from capitalist model if we want success

Must also widen to **go beyond climate** – climate as one of numerous environmental and social crises - address these in an integrated way – cannot be solved separately – e.g. interlinkages between climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation – focus only on reducing emissions not enough – multiple causes of the crisis that must be responded to simultaneously

**Transition from what to what?** Can be used to call for transition from smallholder farming characterised as “backward” to more modern farming, or from unjust system to a more just one

**What is unjust about the existing food system?** Start with **power relations** – global to local level – **concentration of power and ownership** [ref to slide] – huge profits for some while millions go hungry – adverse incorporation of smallholder farmers into corporate value chains – **farmers as price takers**, very small share of final price of product to farmers – farmers continue in poverty while others generate profits off the back of their fundamental work – **limited or no recognition of the key role of farmers** in sustainable natural resource management and use, biodiversity conservation

[slide 4]

**Imperialism** shaping relations between North and Africa – from **colonialism to neo-colonialism** – use financial system to lock African countries into subordinate relationships – IMF and World Bank promoted **loans** for investment in development when excess funds from petro-states flooded the system in 1970s – started with very low interest rates but then skyrocketed in the 1980s – countries couldn't repay

**Forced into structural adjustment** by IMF and World Bank – **abandon price supports on basic foodstuffs, eliminating strategic food reserves, remove free health care and education – export orientation**, infrastructure to support exports – Africa to continue serving needs of North - neo-

colonialism – countries paid back actual value of debts multiple times over, but because of compound interest, still continuing to pay to this day – diverts huge amounts of resources away from investment in public services - crippling and debilitating

**Corporate capture of states** – because states end up spending a significant portion of their resources on debt and interest repayments, corporations come in with funds to the state to support economic activities that allow them to extract resources and wealth from Africa – **public-private partnerships** shaped by corporate agenda – channel what limited state resources there are – democracy hollowed out because state doesn't actually have authority over finances

**WTO and trade agreements** well recognised as being skewed in favour of big powers – in particular the Quad of the US, Canada, EU and Japan – minimum market access, subsidy regime manipulated to favour the Quad

**Three core elements** to a just transition for us to keep in mind  
Ecological sustainability, social justice and redress, economic inclusion and democratisation

**Diverse food systems** across our regions – but move along **trajectory** from smallholder production **to larger scale, industrialisation** – dominant narrative calling for adoption of **Green Revolution** [synthetic fertiliser, pesticides, mechanisation, industrialisation, land consolidation, large-scale irrigation projects] – **corporate value chains** – smallholders to contribute to supply of commodity crops but also expansion of medium and large scale producers – economies of scale, industrial processing, formal retail – SA already there for a long time – other countries adopting policies and plans to move in this direction – generally know that many plans do not come to fruition – however, does inform resource allocations e.g. farm blocks, commercial irrigation

## Ecological sustainability

[slide 5]

Main environmental challenges facing food systems in E and S Africa

**Climate change** – higher temperatures, less rainfall, increased unpredictability which makes planning and adaptation more difficult, more frequent and intense extreme weather events (drought, floods, cold and hot) – at some stage, threat to plant growth

**Green Revolution** - FISPs – **soil exhaustion, water pollution** (leaching, eutrophication) – toxic chemicals for pest management – biodiversity loss and pollution of water systems

**Deforestation** – expansion of production when soils lose fertility – **land use change** from forests and grasslands to agriculture production and urbanisation one of the major causes of climate change, biodiversity loss

**Commercial seed** – homogenous/static – hybrids not able to be reused – introduction of GM seed - restrictions on sale or sharing of farmer and locally adapted varieties – narrow commercial focus on key commodity crops e.g. maize, soya - **loss of agricultural biodiversity**

Critical importance of building and strengthening **resilience and adaptive capacity** in the face of shocks and stresses – need to be very concrete about what this will look like, but from grassroots, as this is context specific

## Social justice and redress

[slide 6]

History of **slavery and colonialism, neo-colonialism** – net extraction from Africa since days of slavery – Africa sponsoring wealth accumulation in North – land dispossession / land grabs a current feature – even for conservation - **recognition and redress of past injustices** the fundamental basis for a just transition

**Climate change** likely resulting in **forced migration** from rural areas – estimated 86 million expected to migrate in SSA as result of climate impacts in next 30 years – previous breadbaskets may become unproductive e.g. Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe

Recognition of **central role of smallholders** in producing food for the continent – requires support

**Africa producing 3% of total GHG emissions** (of which SA one third), hardest hit by negative impacts of climate change – differentiated responsibility for responding to impacts – emissions reductions primarily required from US, EU, UK, China, Russia – Africa not to be forced into cutting emissions – rather, **convergence** – may even be increase in emissions from Africa for development, accompanied by significant decrease in North – unlikely to see this happen in near term, but this is basis of just transition

[slide 7]

**Nutrition transition** – from healthy, whole food-based (minimally processed grains, vegetables, legumes, meat) to unhealthy **highly processed and packaged foods** – overloaded with sugar, salt, oil - huge public health concerns – **diet-related non-communicable diseases** (e.g. diabetes, cancer, heart disease, gastrointestinal) rising to become biggest cause of death – continued **malnutrition** – overnutrition (excessive calories, fats, carbohydrates) coupled with undernutrition (insufficient food leading to hunger, stunting, and wasting especially amongst children) and micronutrient deficiencies

**What is available in the shops and who decides?** - corporates interested in products that are low cost to produce, designed to be hyper-palatable (aka addictive) – undercuts price of healthier foods (e.g. cost of a Coke vs fruit) – huge corporate advertising budgets outstrip public health budgets

### **Agroecology and social justice**

**Principles** of participation, co-creation of knowledge, fairness, connectivity, social values and diets  
Climate people know that solutions will vary by **context** – therefore essential that local populations both informed and with central role in deciding what needs to be done and being involved in implementation

**Diets** – emphasis on culture, indigenous and local crops

## Economic inclusion and democratisation

[slide 8]

Industrialisation and large-scale commercial production marginalises resource-poor producers who have been producing food, stewarding environment, maintaining biodiversity

Shift from active producers to passive consumers – most food purchased, especially in urban areas – need to **strengthen agency** in food system – concretely, local multi-actor dialogues to include farmers, processors, transport, consumers etc to identify priorities, begin to deliberately shape food system rather than leave to market to determine – bypass corporate systems?

**Right to food** at centre of food system – necessity for life – how is it that food has become a commodity that is available only to those who can afford? – shift our thinking – **public good** – not only the food products themselves, but also looking after the land and natural resources – should be supported through public resources

Women-, youth-, African-led **small enterprises and territorial markets** rather than ceding to corporations – territorial markets – start with local need, meet those, then expand outwards – link to agroecology principle of connectivity - re-embedding food systems in local context – direct links between producers and consumers – dialogues between food actors, agency

Need for **clear vision, organisation, networks, systems for working together** – lots of good work being done by many people and organisations and movements all over – but need for joining up – speaking with one voice

These are just some issues on the table for consideration

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