

SMALL-SCALE FARMERS AND THE MAIZE VALUE CHAIN

Our government's vision for agrarian reform is for small-scale farmers to enter the commercial market. This is a pipe dream!



Small-scale farmers and small local millers are locked out of the value chain

Commercial maize cultivation in South Africa is based on the use of genetically modified (GM) seed, chemical fertilisers and pesticides. Small-scale farmers will not be able to afford to pay for these inputs unless government provides financial support or the farmers themselves take out loans to pay for them.

GM seeds are very expensive because they are made artificially in a laboratory and the companies who make them (e.g. Monsanto) charge the farmers high prices for the seed (royalties). The costs of pesticides and fertilisers are also going up all the time.

It is very costly for a farmer to transport maize to a silo and store it there. The large commercial millers, who buy most of the country's maize, only do so in large quantities at a time – usually much larger than a small-scale farmer can produce.

Small-scale maize millers cannot compete with the major millers, who control and dominate the industry.

What are the alternatives for small-scale farmers who want to make a living from their land?

