

## BOOK REVIEW

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*Land, Labour and Livelihoods in rural South Africa. Volume 1: Western Cape and Volume 2 KwaZulu -Natal and Northern Province.* Edited by Michael Lipton, Mike de Klerk and Merle Lipton. Indicator Press 1996, University of Natal, Durban. XXXV + 452 pp (Vol 1) & XXX + 443 pp (Vol 2). Price: R60 each or R100 per set, plus R5 postage per book. ISBN: 1-86840-234-7.

The hypothesis for the work is that small scale farming, which has proved labour intensive and efficient in other labour surplus countries, may generate many sustainable livelihoods in South Africa with its inheritance of capital intensive farms.

This hypothesis was tested in different areas of South Africa and under different farming conditions, contributions being made by agricultural economists and social scientists. Almost invariably researchers reported that smaller farms show poor employment generating potential. The fact that this finding is reported although it differs from the outset hypothesis gives the work credibility. In contrast to the more or less consensus finding that small farms will not create more jobs or may create less, Hatch concluded that communal farms in KwaZulu-Natal generate 10 times more rural livelihoods per ha than commercial farms. The latter finding does not agree with research conducted by the Department of Agricultural Economics at the University of Natal showing that the free access situation that prevails under communal ownership in KwaZulu-Natal is partly to be blamed for the land degradation and low production (although outputs may differ) and livelihood creation under this tenure mode.

The Editors' summaries of the various contributions were very useful to this reader especially since the volumes are long.

The book is not an academic theoretical book but practical and recommended to anyone interested in rural development in South Africa. The price is modest and good value for the investment.

Other observations are:

1. Few rural people are engaged in agriculture for their main source of income and the study could have had a broader focus than simply agriculture.

2. Even if smaller farms do not create more jobs, the establishment of privately owned smaller farms is strongly supported as a vehicle to meet the demand for land by those previously excluded from the land market.
3. Rupert Baber states that local activities are generally time consuming, but yield a small share of household income. An extreme in his study was Rantlekane in the Northern Province where 44% of livelihood time is devoted to agriculture but only 2% of income is generated from it. The ability of agriculture by itself to create more employment is restricted due to the limitation of available land and the solution may be to address urban problems such as unacceptable crime and upgrading urban housing and squatter settlements. These steps may attract more foreign investment and relief the enormous unemployment problems. There appears to be a pent up demand for accommodation and shelter. Commercial farms that have been resettled in KwaZulu-Natal have quickly taken on an urban character.