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Leveraging land and water sector reforms for trade.
Constraints and opportunities for women producers in Zimbabwe

Newman Tekwa

[1]South African Research Chair in Social Policy, College of Graduate Studies, University of South Africa
tekwanewman@gmail.com
Tshwane,
South Africa

ABSTRACT

Context and background

Trade liberation and the creation of a single continental market of goods and services through the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) will create huge economic benefits for economic growth and development across the continent. Nonetheless, the gender-differentiated effects of trade liberalization resulting in the unequal distribution of benefits and costs of trade policies between women and men are well documented. International trade interacts with gender in different ways as conditioned by the distinct economic roles and positions of women and men within agricultural values chains.

Goal and Objectives:

Using the Transformative Social Policy (TSP) framework the paper sought to illuminate possible context-specific pathways through which women agricultural producers can be promoted to take advantage of market opportunities engendered by the implementation of AfCFTA. Preliminary evidence suggests that access to productive agricultural water by women, in a largely arid and drought-prone district which enhanced their productive capacities can be leveraged to take advantage of the trade opportunities coming with the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement.

Methodology:

The quantitative and qualitative data presented in the paper were collected in two rounds of fieldwork, the first conducted in 2016 and the latest in 2022. The study comprised a survey of 105 randomly selected households across 3 study sites, two land reform sites and one non-land reform site that acted as a counterfactual. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the quantitative data, whilst qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis with the aid of Atlas.

Results:

In-kind transfer of productive land to rural households, including those headed by women represents one of the redistributive outcomes of the land reform and resettlement programme in Zimbabwe. While there was room for improvement, at least 18 per cent of the land reform beneficiaries are women. Field data from the study sites indicate that average resettlement farm or plot sizes range from 21.32 ha for medium-scale farms to 16.6 ha in the small-scale farms. This can be contrasted to only 2.78 ha found in the adjacent communal areas where most of the land reform beneficiaries came from. With land as one of the key enablers of the successful implementation of African Continental Free Trade area, with the right policies, women land reform beneficiaries in Zimbabwe are well positioned to take advantage of the market opportunities presented by AfCFTA.

Keywords

land and water reform, AfCFTA, women small-scale farmers, transformative social policy, Chiredzi, Zimbabwe

1. INTRODUCTION

Economic integration and the creation of a single continental market for the free movement of goods, services and investment through intra-African trade, which currently accounts for a just above 10 per cent of the total continental trade, will create huge economic benefits for economic growth and development across the continent (Mudzongo 2023: 3; UN Women East and Southern Africa 2019: 2). The current approximate market size of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) comprises a population of over 1.3 billion people and a combined Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of around US$3 trillion (Mudzongo 2023: 4; MacLead, Luke and Guepie 2023: 23). By 2030, less than a decade from now, the African population is expected to rise to 1.7 billion people with the combined GDP doubling to US$6.7 trillion (MacLead et al. 2023: 23). Attracting over US$4 trillion in investment, the successful implementation of AfCFTA has potential to create numerous trade opportunities and huge benefits for the continent's citizenry including African women (Mudzongo 2023: 4). An analysis of African trade reveals that 68 per cent of the continent's external exports are primary commodities with agricultural export commodities constituting a greater share of these exports (MacLead et al. 2023: 24). These primary export commodities account for 36 per cent of intra-Africa trade, which AfCFTA is expected to boast through regional and continental economic integration (MacLead et al. 2023: 24). Highlighting the importance of agriculture within AfCFTA and coming after industry which is expected to gain by 64.7 per cent and accounting for US$86.2 billion by 2045, the agri-food industrial sector is projected to gain by 20.5 per cent accounting for US$27.2 billion in trade value (MacLead et al. 2023: 27).

The current impetus for AfCFTA represents a renewed continental focus on regional value chains in agricultural commodities and processed products and according to UN Women East and Southern Africa (2019: 7), is happening at a time when the importance of the agricultural sector to the African economy is increasingly being recognized. The implementation of AfCFTA will result in higher productivity, greater competition, lower prices and higher incomes and improved welfare for the African citizenry (World Bank and World Trade Organisation 2020: ix). Significant opportunities for economic empowerment of the African citizenry are anticipated in the aftermath of the full implementation of some of the provisions of AfCFTA. For those engaged as producers in value chains including agriculture, AfCFTA provisions under the Protocol on Rules of Origins would permit access to cheap raw materials, enabling them to produce goods and services with significant African content in terms of raw materials and value addition in line with the preferential trade regime of AfCFTA (Mudzongo 2023: 5; Women East and Southern Africa 2019: 3). Secondly, AfCFTA preferential trade regimes would facilitate small-scale farmers, who account for around 53 per cent of Africa's agricultural producers, integration into larger value chains and access to lucrative regional and continental export markets (UN Women East and Southern Africa 2019: 5; Mudzongo 2023: 5). Third, AfCFTA provisions for gradual liberalisation will enable small-scale producers to enhance their competitiveness in regional trade with positive effects on their social and economic welfare (World Bank and World Trade Organisation 2020: 3). The above is particularly important as a significant amount of food produced in the developing countries are produced by small-scale producers who constitutes the sole or principal source of food traded in domestic markets, and in the context of AfCFTA, for regional and international trade (Proctor and Lucchesi 2012: 3).

However, the share of women exporters in countries specialising in commodities, including those from agriculture was found to be around 12 per cent (World Bank and World Trade Organisation 2020: 55). Thus, despite being the major producers of the food that is traded, for African women to benefit substantially from AfCFTA, numerous barriers on the supply side and market access side holding back women economically need to be lifted (World Bank and World Trade Organisation 2020: 3). Market access barriers faced by small-scale women producers dampening their effective participation in regional and international markets include limited access to market driven information, lack of export expertise and high tariffs (World Bank and World Trade Organisation 2020: 55). This is in addition to lack of understanding of border procedures by small-scale women producers resulting in incurrence of more trading costs in intra-regional trade relative to their male counterparts (UN Women East and Southern Africa 2019: 7). Provisions under AfCFTA are expected to address many of these market access barriers by small-scale women producers.

The supply side denotes to policies designed to increase output by changing the conditions under which goods and services are supplied. On the supply side several factors affect the effective participation of small-scale producers in intra-regional and international markets including lack of access to trade finance, marketing infrastructural challenges and low production both in quantity and quality terms (Sautier and Bienabe 2005: 2; Mangnus and de Steenhuijsen Piters 2010: 28). Market infrastructure includes transport, storage, warehousing, decentralized sanitary and phytosanitary certification centres (UN Women East and Southern Africa 2019: 12). Standards and phytosanitary measures refer to mutual recognition of standards, licencing, and certification of service suppliers making it easier for producers to meet export standards and satisfy regulatory requirements for niche markets (Sautier and Bienabe 2005: 2; UN Women East and Southern Africa 2019: 3). While AfCFTA will address some of the supply side challenges such as access to cheap agricultural inputs, key constraints for women relating to factors of production remain unattended. Available evidence indicate that female-managed plots achieve lower productivity than male-managed plots, additionally, female farmers are less likely to produce cash crops that are traded for profit rather than consumed (World Bank and World trade Organisation 2020: 59). While the gender productivity gap was found to be between 20-30 per cent, in Malawi it is as high as 44 percent (World Bank and World Trade Organisation 2020: 59). However, accumulating evidence suggests that the gender of a farmer per se does not directly explain lower agricultural productivity, rather it is gender differences in equality of opportunity such as access to and use of agricultural inputs, access to markets, human and physical capital, crop choices and marketing of agricultural produce that are particularly key (World Bank and World Trade Organisation 2020: 59).

Most importantly the size of plots and ownership of land used for farming constitutes one of the key factors explaining these gendered productivity gaps (Tekwa 2020; World Bank and World Trade Organisation 2020: 59). Land remains a key resource and enabler for the successful implementation of AfCFTA (UN Women East and Southern Africa 2019: 12). Apart from maintaining millions of African farming households, land produces 68 per cent of Africa's exports and a significant one third of the agricultural commodities to be traded (MacLead et al. 2023: 24; Robbins 2011: 8). For small-scale women agricultural producers, unequal access to land resulting from restrictive rights to land, remain a key impediment for their effective participation in regional value chains (Sautier and Bienabe 2005: 2; UN Women East and Southern Africa 2019: 18). A possible explanation why small-

scale women agricultural producers specialises more in the production of less valuable staple agricultural commodities maybe due to their small land sizes (Proctor and Lucchesi 2012: 18; Bailey 2000: 1). The situation becomes more acute for small-scale women producers if access to services such as trade finance, up-to-date export market information, export crop technical and advisory services and other marketing resources is based on land titles as they often lack formal land ownership (Mangnus and de Steenhuijsen Piters 2010: 12). These factors make the consistent delivery/supply of good quality products a big challenge for women small-scale agricultural producers relative to their male counterparts (Mangnus and de Steenhuijsen Piters 2010: 12). Compounding the above, especially in this era of climate change, relates to access to productive water for irrigation, an enabling climate change adaptive measure for small-scale women agricultural producers.

Taking cognisance that trade liberalisation on its own may not necessarily be beneficial for women as aggregate benefits might be positive but with gendered localised costs, in a context of land and water sector reforms, the following research questions guided this study:

1.1. Research questions

- What leverages and opportunities can small- and medium scale female chilli and sugarcane producers in Chiredzi, Zimbabwe capitalise to benefit from market opportunities created by the AfCFTA?
- What are the potential supply side and export market access constraints small-scale women producers can encounter in accessing regional and continental markets and trade opportunities emanating from the implementation of AfCFTA?
- What policy solutions can be proffered to buttress trade opportunities and address the potential challenges by small and medium scale female export agricultural producers in maximising benefits accruing from the implementation of AfCFTA?

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. The next section provides a brief review of literature followed by a section on research methods and conceptual framework that informed the research. This is followed by a discussion of findings and lastly a conclusion and a few recommendations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The impact of trade on women had received relatively little attention, and where they are mentioned, women benefit mainly as workers in agricultural value chains, as consumers of traded commodities and as family members (Rocha and Piermartini 2023: 49; World Bank and World Trade Organisation 2020: ix). Women as producers of commodities to be traded is missed in many analyses of the interaction of trade with gender (World Bank and World Trade Organisation 2020: ix). Women as entrepreneurs are seldom associated with formal trade, particularly the trading of primary commodities in Africa as they are less likely have access to, control over or ownership of land resources from which traded commodities, both mineral and agricultural products, are extracted (Robbins 2011: 8). In trading of agricultural commodities, it was found that female small-scale farmers are less likely to produce cash crops that are traded for profit rather than consumed and seldom are they associated with the 'Farmer' title usually a preserve for men (Tekwa 2023: 105; World Bank and World Trade Organisation 2020: 59). With AfCFTA's provisions seeking to build the

productive capacities of small-scale producers, the majority of whom are women, to enhance their market competitiveness in agricultural value chains, small-scale farms are conceptualised as referring to family farms as operated units in which most of the labour and enterprise come from the farm family, which puts much of its working time on the farm (Lipton 2005 cited in Proctor and Lucchesi 2012: 17). Small-scale farms may also be extended to include communal farming (Bailey 2000: 1). Market competitiveness, including within agricultural value chains, is defined as the capacity to improve a market position (Bourdanove 1991 cited in Sautier and Bienabe 2005: 2). Important to note is that market competitiveness also dependent on non-market factors such as reputation, specific quality attributes, including climatic and environmental factors (Sautier and Bienabe 2005: 2). Value chains including those in agriculture, denotes the full range of activities required to bring a product from conception to the final disposal after use (Kaplinsky 2000 cited in Mangnus and de Steenhuijsen Piters 2010: 12).

2.1 Gender, trade and global value chains

International trade is increasingly being dominated by global value chains (GVCs) which provides opportunities for export growth, the development of which is considered critical for women's economic empowerment especially in the context of intra-regional trade (World Bank and World Trade Organisation 2020: 6; UN Women East and Southern Africa 2019: 18). Global value chains are proposed as conduits for connecting female small-scale agricultural producers to international markets (Rocha and Piermartini 2023: 50). However, increasing small-scale women producers' access to international markets hinges on several factors including investment in infrastructure, access to international trade finance, macroeconomic stability and effective land governance including reduction in gender imbalances (World Bank and World Trade Organisation 2020: 12). Additionally, women small-scale agricultural producers' competitiveness in open markets cannot be enhanced unless there is public investment in economic infrastructure in rural areas which includes roads, electricity, water supply, irrigation, communication (Bailey 2000: 4; Sautier and Bienabe 2005: 1). In the context of the implementation of AfCFTA, there are several key gender considerations in agricultural value chains for intra-regional and international trade (UN Women East and South Africa 2019: 18). These includes an assessment of women's sources of raw material (if, any), access to high value lucrative export markets, ability to identify niche markets for various agricultural value chains at both regional and international levels; availability of support investment in packaging, labelling, product certification critical in enhancing their market competitiveness and access (Sautier and Bienabe 2005: 5; UN Women East and South Africa 2019: 18). This is in addition to assessing their key constraints and opportunities as well as success highlights. Small-scale agricultural producers can obtain higher profits through vertical integration when women agricultural producers take additional activities in the value chain such as processing, grading and packaging and horizontal integration when they become involved in chain management (KIT 2006 cited in Mangnus and de Steenhuijsen Piters 2010: 14). The gendered implications of the above needs to be understood in the context of state withdrawal from interfering with market processes.

3. METHODS AND MATERIALS

The quantitative and qualitative data presented in the paper were collected in two rounds of fieldwork, the first conducted in 2016 and the latest in 2022. The study comprised a survey of 105

randomly selected households across 3 study sites, two land reform sites and one non-land reform site that acted as a counterfactual. Study site 1 is a small-scale farming area comprising 13 female-headed and 20 male-headed households making a total of 33 households. Following access to water for irrigation water from a 40-kilometre canal these small-scale producers are engaged in chili production under contract farming. Study site 2 with a total of 32 households (17 female-headed and 15 male-headed households) following their access to sugarcane plots averaging 20 hectares in size during the land redistribution programme, are now engaged into high value sugar production under a private out grower scheme. Study site 3 is a counterfactual communal site comprising 19 female and 21 male-headed household staying in a communal ward in proximity to the two land reform sites. Apart from gathering household demographic characteristics, the survey instrument collected data on total and per capita household cultivable land; size of land under irrigation, access to inputs, types of crops grown including crops grown under contract farming and similar arrangement, production levels, access to markets for different crop, access to and different sources of market information and uses such information is used for including challenges relating to access to product markets. The data was then analysed and presented below.

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: TRANSFORMATIVE SOCIAL POLICY

The Transformative Social Policy (TSP) framework, see Figure 1 below, emerged out of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) global research project on Social Policy in a Development Context (Adesina 2011: 466; see also Mkandawire 2007: UNRISD 2006).

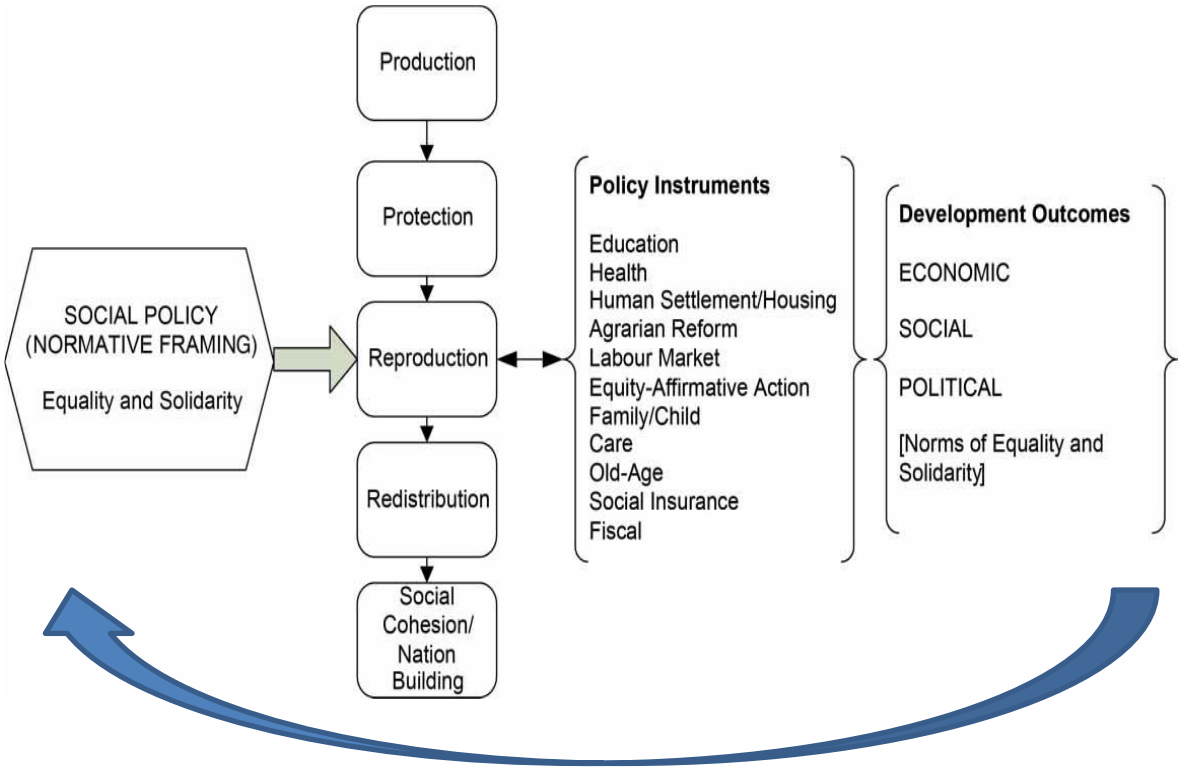

Figure 1. Transformative social policy: norms, functions, instruments and outcomes

Source: Adesina, 2011: 463

The core idea of the TSP includes the multiple task of social policy namely production, redistribution, protection, reproduction social cohesion and nation building (Adesina 2011: 463). This is in addition to the diversity of social policy instruments that can tap into the different tasks of social policy, land and agrarian reform being a case in point. Apart of highlighting the synergistic relationship between economic and social policies, the TSP emphasises the need for the transformation of the economy, social relations, and institutions. All these are underlain by normative underpinnings of solidarity and the pursuit of equality (Adesina 2011: 463). Key aspects of this research resonate with the principles and ideas behind the TSP. First relates to the role of agriculture or land reform as a fair distributor of income and welfare ((Robbins 2011: 8). The structural transformation of economies dovetails with AfCFTA's mandate of structurally transforming African economies from heavy dependence on primary commodities; and the long overdue imperative for industrialisation and economic diversification key for the realizing of both the African Union Agenda 2063 and United Nations Agenda 2030 (MacLead, Luke and Guepie 2023: 24; UN Women East and Southern Africa 2019: 2). Transformation of social relations and institutions relates to the need for change in socio-cultural attitudes preventing women from fully benefitting from trade such as women's ownership of land (World Bank and World Trade Organisation 2020: 12). Guided by the TSP framework the study seeks to evaluate the extent to which land reform and the accompanying water sector reforms provides opportunities for women to capitalize on the trade opportunities engendered by AfCFTA and the constraints that may prevent their full maximization of AfCFTA's trade opportunities.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

One of the outcomes of the latest land reform programme is the redistribution of a key enabler resource in the successful implementation of AfCFTA and the transformation of the country's agrarian structure and production relations. The Rural Land (Farm Sizes) Regulations of 1999 SI 419/1999 remains the key statutory instrument that guided the implementation of the land reform programme of 2000 (Matondi 2020: 1). Table 1 below presents different farms sizes by Zimbabwe's ecological region (Matondi 2020: 2).

Natural Region	A1 Farm Sizes (ha)			A2 Farm Sizes (Ha)	Peri-Urban Areas (Ha)
	Arable	Grazing	Total		
1	5	7	12	250	3-30
2a	5	10	15	330	3-30
2b	5	15	20	400	3-30
3	10	20	30	500	3-30
4	10	30	40	1500	3-30
5	10	60	70	2000	3-30

Table 1: Statutory rural farm size regulations of 1999
Source: Government of Zimbabwe Statutory Instrument 419/1999

Natural Region 1 comprises the country's highest agricultural production region and receives the highest amounts of rainfall. This is followed by Natural Region 2a,2b up to Natural Region 5, which is the least in terms of agricultural (crop) production potential (Matondi 2020: 2). In the aftermath of implementing such an extensive land reform programme, ordinary Zimbabweans are poised to take advantage of the market opportunities to be made available from the successful implementation of AfCFTA as there were the main beneficiaries of the land reform programme with the potential of equalizing the benefits of the land reform programme. According to Moyo et al. (2009: 1), the government of Zimbabwe redistributed about 80 percent of former large-scale commercial farms to

a broad base of beneficiaries. These included mostly rural peasants, employed and unemployed urbanites, former farm workers and white farmers (Moyo *et al.* 2009:1). While the above provides a national picture, the next section provides insight on how the land reform programme unfolded in Chiredzi district, located in Masvingo Province and largely falling into Natural Regions 4 and 5, refer to Table 1 above. Presented in Table 2 and 3 are the outcomes in terms of household in-kind transfer of agricultural land which ranged from an average of 21.32 ha for A2 medium-scale farms to 16.6 ha for A1 small-scale farms. This contrasts with 2.78 ha found in the counterfactual control group providing an insight into the extent of land scarcity prevailing in much of the communal areas of Zimbabwe and an impediment to maximizing the trade opportunities that will be made available from the successful implementation of AfCFTA. Limited access to land in the counterfactual is a legacy of colonialism which saw the alienation of land from indigenous people from high productive to low productive areas to create large-scale commercial farms for the white settlers. Over the generations with population increase this resulted in continuous fragmentation of the available land resulting in unsustainable land sizes in which 77.5 per cent of the households have less than 2 hectares of land. A chi-square test indicates a strong correlation between gender of household land and household cultivable land with a p-value of 0.01. This suggests that in these patriarchal communal areas, female-headed households are disproportionately overrepresented in households with less than 2 hectares of cultivated land. Below are some of the insider perspective from a female land reform beneficiary in Chiredzi.

> *"In the communal areas, we had only 0.5 ha of land mainly because in my husband's family there were many male children, and the land was not adequate. But when we came here, we got large pieces of land. The land we had in the communal areas was not adequate to grow enough food for the family (In-depth interview A1 women land beneficiary. Date: 13 April 2016)*

The above highlight the extent of land shortages in former tribal trust lands now communal areas, act as a constraint to many small-scale farming households to benefit from the trade opportunities that will emanate from the successful implementation of AfCFTA.

Accompanying the land reform programme in Zimbabwe were reforms in the water sector. The existing riparian water right system with its origins in the colonial era was abolished leading to the promulgation of the water permit system. The repeal through the Water Act of 2000 saw the decentralisation and democratisation og access to productive water in Zimbabwe. These reforms were well captured in an interview with the Chiredzi sub-Catchment Field Officer:

> *The permit system was a new system improvised by the government to fit in the 'new farmer'. The newly resettled farmers were not in these water allocations. The water right system counted the number of farmers per given area and then shared all the water available among themselves. It made the water permanently belong to the concerned farmers. It was not possible for the new farmers to access the available water had the government not changed the existing water policy (Key Informant Interview Chiredzi sub-Catchment Field Officer, dated 21 May 2016).*

In the drier Chiredzi District the water reforms enabled resettled farmers to access water for irrigation from the 40-kilometre water canal (see Figure 2 below) which supplied water to the former Mkwasine Sugar Estate and its out-grower schemes.

Figure 2. The 40-kilometre Manjirenji-Mkwasine water canal (Field Observations, 2016)

	MKWASINE A2 FARMS						MAWARE A1 FARMS						MUTEYO COMMUNAL AREAS					
	Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
LAND SIZE (Ha)	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
2 Ha and Below	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	77.8	17	77.2	31	77.5
3-5 Ha	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	22.2	5	22.8	9	22.5
6-10 Ha	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	46.7	11	61.1	18	54.5	0	0	0	0	0	0
11-15 Ha	2	16.7	1	5.0	3	9.4	5	33.3	4	22.2	9	27.3	0	0	0	0	0	0
16-20 Ha	5	41.6	9	45.0	14	43.8	0	0.0	1	5.6	1	3.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
21-25 Ha	2	16.7	6	30.0	8	25.0	3	20.0	2	11.1	5	15.2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Above 25 Ha	3	25.0	4	20.0	7	21.9	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	12	100	20	100	32	100	15	100	18	100	33	100	18	100	22	100	40	100
Max. Land Size Ha	-	-	-	-	43.0	-	-	-	-	-	50.0						5.0	
Min. Land Size Ha					14.5						7.0						0.5	
Mean Land Size Ha					21.32						16.6						2.78	
Standard Deviation					5.59						14.7						1.12	
Chi-Square P-Value					1.727						1.943						0.01	

Table 2. Gender disaggregated household landholding by study site

Source: Fieldwork (2016)

	MKWASINE A2 FARMS						MAWARE A1 FARMS						MUTEYO COMMUNAL AREAS					
	Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
LAND SIZE (Ha)	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
None	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	100	22	100	40	100
1 Ha and Below	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6.7	0	0.0	1	3.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2 Ha	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	26.6	4	22.2	8	24.2	0	0	0	0	0	0
3-5 Ha	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	60.0	10	55.6	19	57.6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Above 5 Ha	12	100	20	100	32	100	1	6.7	4	22.2	5	15.2	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	12	37.5	20	62.5	32	100	15	45.5	18	100	33	100	18	45.0	22	55.0	40	100
Mean Cultivated & Irrigated Area Ha	20.3	19.7	21.6	19.6	21.3	19.6	6.9	3.5	6.5	4.3	6.27	3.83	2.4	0.0	2.0	0.0	2.19	0.0

Table 3: Mean cultivated and irrigated area (Ha) by gender of household head

Source: Fieldwork (2016).

With enhanced access to productive agricultural water, as presented in Table 3 above, the average irrigated land increased to 19.3 ha and 3.83 ha under irrigation for the A2 medium-scale and A1 small-scale farms, respectively. This is contrasted to the absence of any form of irrigation in the counterfactual control group. While lack of access to irrigation in the counterfactual study site suggests the precarity of the agricultural production systems to vagaries of climate change, access to water for irrigation by resettled small-scale A1 and medium-scale A2 farmers represents an effective adaptive measure enabling them to take advantage of the trade opportunities to be made available following the successful implementation of AfCFTA (Robbins 2011: 8). Below l outline some of the production outcomes in terms of chili and sugarcane production.

5.1 Integration into high value chili and sugarcane value chains

Tapping into the productive function of the TSP framework, the land and water sector reforms of 2000 in Zimbabwe enabled the integration of A1 small-scale female and male land beneficiaries and A2 medium-scale land beneficiaries into export-oriented chili and sugarcane agricultural value chains under contract farming and private out grower scheme respectively.

Figure 3. Small-scale chili production under contract farming A1 farming areas

Source: Field Observations (2016)

Following access to land thorough the land reform programme and access to productive agricultural water in the aftermath of the water sector reforms, small-scale farmers in the study site have been integrated into production of chili for regional market export, see figure 3 above. These small-scale farmers, in the context of AfCFTA, can leverage on their access to productive land and water to take advantage of the market opportunities AfCFTA is set to present. Within the A2 medium-scale farms, women farmers have been integrated into high value sugarcane production chains, see Figure 4, below.

Figure 4. Out-grower sugarcane plot under harvesting and ratoon maintenance

Source: Field Observation May 2022

As envisaged by AfCFTA, the case of Tongaat Huletts and Better Agriculture in a context of land (and water sector reforms), highlights extent to which value chain development enhances the productive capacity of land reform beneficiaries (small-scale and medium-scale agricultural producers, including women) providing them with outlets for their farm produce. However, this is not without their own set of challenges.

5.2 Potential constraints maximise AfCFTA export market opportunities

While Better Agriculture provides a readily available market for chili, lack of public investment in economic infrastructure, particularly roads, electricity, water supply, communication, remains an impediment for small-scale producers in Maware access to external markets for agricultural commodities they produce. During surveys, many indicated that the nearest point to a tarred road is more than 40 kilometres away. This is in addition to lack of market information apart from that of chili provided by Better Agriculture. Lack of organisation, for instance, in the form of producer organisations, represents another weakness observed in the A1 small-scale farming area. The above may not be applicable to the A2 sugarcane farming area as the area is characterised by already established transport networks both road and rail for the transportation of sugarcane from the fields to the mills. Unlike the A1 farming area where small-scale farmer produces other crops in addition to keeping livestock, the A2 farming area specialises in the production of a single crop, sugarcane. Resultantly, the farmers organised themselves to establish an association, the Mkwasine Sugarcane Farmers Association (MSFA). MSFA is responsible for representing the farmers on several issues including the negotiations with THZ on the off-take price of sugarcane at the beginning of each harvesting season. This is in addition to providing farmers with market information, particularly the price of sugar on the global market. Within AfCFTA, MSFA can leverage on protocols on rules of origin and public procurement to source cheap inputs for farmers particularly fertilisers and herbicide. Additionally, the preferential trade regime of AfCFTA may provide alternative sources of markets for the sugarcane rather than relying on THZ. The only constraint on the latter may pertain to absence

of alternative milling services as THZ both mills and markets the sugar for the farmers but for a service charged to the farmers. Irrespective, AfCFTA provides for opportunities for farmers to exploit beyond THZ.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Highlighting the constraints faced by female small-scale producers in accessing external markets through trade, the paper discussed the extent to which, in a context of land and water sector reforms, small-scale female agricultural producers can leverage on the trade opportunities that will be made available in the aftermath of successful implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) that seeks to create a single and integrated continental market for intra-African trade. Data gathered through a mixed method approach and informed by the Transformative Social Policy framework highlighted land as the potential key impediment for small-scale agricultural producers to maximise the trade opportunities emanating from AfCFTA in which agricultural produce constitutes the majority commodities to be traded. In this era of climate, a close nexus between the successful implementation of AfCFTA and climate change remains an important consideration if the majority African citizenry are to benefit from the market reforms engendered by AfCFTA. Small-scale female producers face insurmountable supply side and market access constraints in the absence of state invention as envisaged by the TSP framework. State interventions in land and water sectors have potential to make available to small-scale producers, including women, key productive resources enabling the successful implementation of AfCFTA—land and water resources. Key findings from the research indicates that access to land and water for irrigation enabled small-scale farmers including women to be integrated into export-oriented chili production under contract farming whilst medium-scale farmer, including women were integrated into high value chains of sugarcane production under a private out-grower scheme. In the context of increased opportunities for participation in intra-African trade, the ability of these farmers to produce commodities for export markets both in terms of quantity and quality, they are poised to gain from the successful implementation of AfCFTA. For the A2 sugarcane farmers, AfCFTA will reduce their dependence on Tongaat Huletts Zimbabwe and exploit regional and continental markets for their sugar provided the State assist by investing in a Milling plant at Mkwasine. This will not only create jobs but also enhances profit margins for medium-scale sugarcane producers as haulage costs constitute a substantial portion of their production cost. However, farmers can still exploit AfCFTA provisions of sourcing cheaper inputs through its protocols on public procurement preferential trade regimes. Lack of public investment in economic infrastructure to facilitate access to markets remains a key impediment for small-scale producers to take advantage of AfCFTA market opportunities. As findings from the research indicates, formation of Producer Organisations and Associations remains a key strategy if small-scale farmers are to maximise opportunities emanating from the successful implementation of AfCFTA. Based on findings from this research, l proffers the following practical recommendations if small-scale farmers are to maximise on trade opportunities emanating from AfCFTA:

- The need to address context-specific challenges faced by women entrepreneurs and women producers to respond to trade opportunities engendered by AfCFTA

- Enhancing women access to market information through creation of women business networks and associations, women producer groups
- National trade and export authorities and missions to specifically promote women entrepreneurs, women producers, and women-led export firms.
- Education, skills development, and trade facilitation for small-scale women agricultural producers
- Address cultural, social and gender norms with potential to impede full participation of small-scale agricultural producers in trade opportunities created by AfCFTA.
- Continued state support for resettled small-scale farmers, especially women through access to trade finance as the current short-term farm credit from contracting companies based on a 30-day account is economically unsustainable for farmers.

9. AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS:

Individual authorship.

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11. KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Land reform: is defined as government policies aimed at altering structures of access to land (White et al 2014: 2).

Water sector reforms: Water-reform processes involve changing how people access, use and interact with water resources

Gender: represents a key theoretical and conceptual innovation of feminist scholarship that explains the persistent inequality between women and men.