

Adrian Joseph

The history of land reform shows that if the rural poor are given quality farmland and consistent post-settlement support, they can escape poverty permanently, writes Adrian Joseph. The Constitution of South Africa lays out the legal policy basis for land reform but the post-apartheid government's policy implementation has consistently fallen short of its redistribution targets.

Despite its relatively limited contribution to the overall economy, the agricultural sector is particularly important for the rural poor – but the post-apartheid land-reform programme has been disastrous for the rural poor, as government policies have continued to exacerbate de-agrarianisation. Although a sizeable proportion of the black population still resides in rural areas, most are engaged in agriculture on a negligible scale and depend mainly on non-agricultural activities such as urban migration or welfare grants to sustain their livelihoods.

For land redistribution to be successful, the institutional structure needs to be overhauled so that small farmers can gain access to agricultural extension services, such as educational opportunities and credit facilities. And the transfer of knowledge in conjunction with the consensual transfer of land would best serve the interests of marginalised farmers. However, it would not serve the interests of opportunistic politicians who want to remain in power by making those farmers dependent on the government for support.

Mobilising civil-society organisations and local agricultural cooperatives would give new small farmers more flexible support which would provide a welcome alternative to bureaucratic government departments.

BIO

University: University of Cape Town

Funding: Parents

More about Adrian

Favourite subjects: Development Economics; Poverty, Development and Globalisation; and Politics of International Economic Relations.

Interests: Freelance writing, with articles published covering topics related to politics and economics.

Inspired by: Former president Thabo Mbeki's 'I am an African' speech, which captures the hope of a diverse generation of young African thought leaders who are motivated to see Africa prosper in the future.

Main achievements: Prefect of the Year award at Pretoria Boys' High School.

Community activity: Involved with SHAWCO; contributed to the publication of *SAX Appeal* magazine; played a part in founding the Open Mind Society at UCT.

In 10 years' time ... My ambition is play my part in ensuring that South Africa truly belongs to all who live in it. I hope to acquire experience by being involved with civil society organisations and to use my skills to make a meaningful impact on our society.