

## REACTIONS OF PEASANTS TO GLOBAL CAPITAL IN ZIMBABWE: A CASE STUDY OF TOBACCO CONTRACT FARMING IN MASHONALAND EAST PROVINCE

Yumi SAKATA<sup>(1)</sup>

*Sam Moyo African Institute for Agrarian Studies*

**ABSTRACT** This study presents an empirical survey of the economy of peasant farmers against the backdrop of the penetration of global market forces into rural Zimbabwe. As shown in a series of works by Sam Moyo and the African Institute of Agrarian Studies based in Harare, the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP), which was undertaken in the 2000s, reconfigured the agrarian structure in Zimbabwe. Tobacco is one of the sectors that clearly show that among the aims of the FTLRP was the peasantization of the country's agriculture. The reconfiguration of the tobacco industry was taken place in parallel with the FTLRP and the introduction of the contract farming arrangement fuelled the peasantization of the industry. Through the tobacco contract farming arrangement, the peasants have been more exposed to the global capital, and their tobacco farming has been much more internationalized. After showing the mode of business conducted by the global capital in the rural Zimbabwe, the study concludes by demonstrating the diversified rural tobacco market which the peasants take advantage of in the global economy.

**Key Words:** Zimbabwe; Peasants; Tobacco; Contract farming; Global capital.

### INTRODUCTION

This study presents an empirical survey of the economy of peasant farmers against the backdrop of the penetration of global market forces into rural Zimbabwe. As shown in a series of works by Sam Moyo and the African Institute of Agrarian Studies based in Harare, the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP), which was undertaken in the 2000s, reconfigured the agrarian structure in Zimbabwe. The FTLRP was aimed at adjusting the racial land possession imbalance, and is characterized as the means of drastic transformation the agricultural structure.<sup>(2)</sup> The reform distributed land from the dominant white large-scale farmers to mass African peasant farmers. Mamdani (2008) highlighted that Zimbabwean land reform made the greatest transfer of property in Southern Africa since colonisation, and it has all happened extremely rapidly.

This highly redistributive land reform, which was supposedly 'democratic,' faced harsh criticism from around the world. The western media and some groups of academia argued that the reform caused gross violation of 'human rights' through the acquisition of 'private property' from the people (who 'owned' the land before), and the collapse of 'food sovereignty' (Hammer et al., 2003; Richardson, 2005). The media portrayed the reform as 'brutal,' 'undemocratic' or 'violent' since the

white ‘privately owned’ lands were often forcefully expropriated.<sup>(3)</sup> While the fact that there were brutal violations through the reform cannot be erased, Moyo’s work showed that how the FTLRP greatly distributed lands to the peasants and the racially imbalanced agrarian structure was adjusted to a great extent.

Tobacco is one of the sectors that clearly show that among the aims of the FTLRP was the peasantization of the country’s agriculture. With the introduction of contract farming, the tobacco industry managed to absorb many peasants who had been allocated relatively small plots under the FTLRP, as A1 farmers (Moyo, 2011a; 2013; Chambati, 2013; Moyo & Nyoni, 2013; Moyo & Yeros, 2013). The research interest of this paper is to explore how the tobacco industry became the major agricultural industry for peasants after the FTLRP.

The paper also examines the arrangements that opened the industry to peasants through contracts with international companies. This development raises questions of whether the peasants should be exposed more intensely to global capital, whether they have been marginalised even more by global capital, and how they cope with the global market forces of the 21st century. After discussing the way business is conducted in rural Zimbabwe with global capital, the paper concludes by showing how peasants have created an informal agricultural market and taken advantage of neoliberal capital.

## THE PEASANTIZATION OF THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY

It was through the white settlers that the agrarian structure is characterized as a dualistic system under which blacks became a labour pool for white farming capitalists. At independence of Zimbabwe in 1980 the white population was less than 2% although it owned about 47% of the agricultural land; blacks constituted more than 95% of the population and occupied the remaining land (Moyo, 2011a). Until the beginning of the FTLRP, this racially dualistic system persisted. The FTLRP redistributed land through small-scale (A1) farms and medium-scale commercial (A2) farm schemes. The size of A1 farms varies depending on the condition and the environment of the agricultural lands. However, Moyo (2013) showed the average size of an A1 farm to be 20 hectares, including access to common grazing areas, and the average size of an A2 farm 142 hectares. The reform programme had produced about 145,800 A1 farms and 23,000 A2 farms by 2010 (Moyo, 2013: 43). Communal areas account for 42% of land in the country, and 74.2% of this land is in the poorest rainfall zones (Moyo, 1992: 9). Blacks were forced to live in communal areas during the colonial era, which ended in 1980.

Sam Moyo demonstrated how the agrarian structure shown in his tri-modal was reconfigured from 2000, as shown in Table 1 (Moyo & Nyoni, 2013; Moyo & Yeros, 2013). The tri-modal structure is composed of peasants, medium-to-large-scale farms and estates (Chambati, 2013; Moyo & Nyoni, 2013; Moyo & Yeros, 2013). While the tri-modal until the FTLRP was favoured the class of large-scale farms, the land occupied by the peasants was greatly expanded after

**Table 1.** Agrarian structure: Estimated landholdings from 1980 to 2010

Farm categories	Farms/households (thousands)						Area held (thousand hectares)						Average Farm size (ha)		
	1980		2000		2010		1980		2000		2010		1980	2000	2010
	No	%	No	%	No	%	ha	%	ha	%	ha	%			
Group 1															
Peasantry	700	98.00	1,125	98.70	1,321	98.00	16,400	49.00	20,067	61.00	25,826	79.00	23	18	20
Group 2															
Mid-sized farms	8.5	1.00	8.5	1.00	30.9	2.00	1,400	4.00	1,400	4.00	4,400	13.00	165	165	142
Large farms	5.4	1.00	4.956	0.40	1.371	0.10	13,000	39.00	8,691.6	27.00	1,156.9	4.00	2,407	1,754	844
Sub-total	13.9	2.00	13.456	1.40	32.271	2.10	14,400	43.00	10,091.6	31.00	5,556.9	17.00	2,572	1,919	986
Group 3															
Estates	0.296	0.10	0.296	0.02	0.247	0.02	2,567	8.00	2,567	8.00	1,494.60	5.00	8,672	8,672	6,051
Total	714	100.00	1,139	100.00	1,354	100.00	33,367	100.00	32,726	100.00	32,878	100.00	46.7	28.7	24.3

Source: Adapted from Moyo & Nyoni (2013).

the reform in 2010. This new structure, a result of the FTLRP, is unique in that it is based on a clear demarcation in state policy: distinct land holding sizes, forms of land tenure, the social status of landholders, and dominant forms of labour used (Moyo, 2011a; Moyo & Nyoni, 2013; Moyo & Yeros, 2013). The peasantry, or the small-scale farming group, is dominant in aggregate number of farms, including communal, old resettlement and A1 farms (group 1 in Table 1). Farmers in this category hold usufruct permits over their land and depend on family labour (Moyo & Nyoni, 2013; Moyo & Yeros, 2013). The second group consists of small-scale commercial farms (SSCFs), A2 farms and large-scale commercial farms (LSCFs) (group 2 in Table 1). The farmers in the latter category hold 99-year non-tradable leases and depend more on hired labour than on family labour (Moyo & Nyoni, 2013; Moyo & Yeros, 2013). This second category is remarkable among the other groups in the tri-modal disposition as a new class that emerged as a result of the FTLRP. Before the advent of the FTLRP this class was made up mainly of large-scale white commercial farmers. After the FTLRP the proportion of medium-sized black-owned farms increased and the class became more racially balanced. The third group comprises state-owned and privately owned estates (group 3 in Table 1). They hire large numbers of permanent and seasonal labourers and contract outgrowers (Moyo, 2011a; Moyo & Nyoni, 2013).

The FTLRP enlarged the peasantry and increased the number of medium-sized farms, while reducing the number of LSCFs, most of which are white-owned. With the addition of thousands more black A2 medium- and large-scale farms, the land reform programme has created a 'de-racialised' tri-modal agrarian structure (Moyo, 2011b). While the estates retain about 5% of all agricultural land, the actors involved in their businesses, such as outgrowers and shareholders, are diversified in terms of race, nationality and class (Moyo & Nyoni, 2013: 203).

The tobacco sector has steadily aligned with the agricultural class transformation brought about through the FTLRP. With the land reform the number of small-to-medium-sized tobacco growers greatly increased, and the

structure of the tobacco industry was ‘de-racialised.’ Since the arrival of the British South African Company column in 1890, land in Zimbabwe has had great potential for farming, especially for tobacco (Rubert, 1998).<sup>(4)</sup> Immigrants from Europe and South Africa led by the column started growing tobacco in the early 1920s, and tobacco had surpassed the revenue from gold among Southern Rhodesia’s exports by 1945 (Rubert, 1998). Tobacco has been an important cash crop for both the country and the farmers. The colonial government also put a lot of effort such as subsidies to expand tobacco farming led by the commercial white farmers, and the tobacco industry during the colonial time was formed as a dualistic aspect, divided between white capitalists and black labourers (Rubert, 1998). The tobacco structure only configured after the FTLRP, in parallel with the new national-level agrarian tri-modal structure.

Table 2 shows yield and area planted for tobacco in the three classes. Small farms in the table consist of communal, old resettlement and A1 farms. Medium farms consist of SSCF and A2 farms. Large farms consist of LSCFs. The table shows how the tobacco industry has changed to another level of tri-modal, enlarging the presence of small-to-medium-scale farms, as can also be seen at the national level.

In 1995, before the land reform programme, the dominant large farms grew about 98% of tobacco, and about 94% of the tobacco fields were controlled by this class. By 2012 the share of national tobacco production of large farms had decreased to 21%, medium farms increased their share to 26%, and small farms had the largest share, growing 53%. The area under tobacco has also been transformed the racially balanced tri-modal, in which the dominant small-scale farmers have more than 50% shares in the production and the tobacco growing area. The FTLRP created an agricultural structure for small- and medium-scale farms to engage in the industry as tobacco growers.

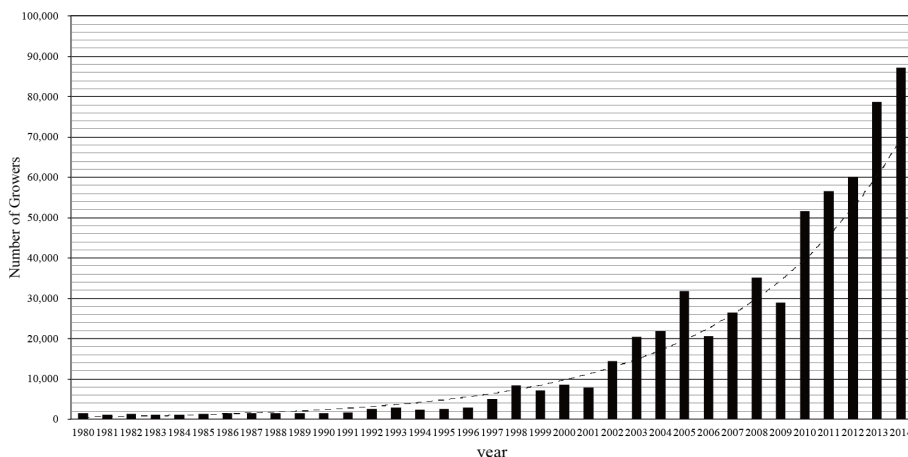
The tobacco industry was also reconfigured by the introduction of contract farming. Until 2004 all the tobacco produced in Zimbabwe was sold at only three licensed auction floors: Boka Tobacco Auction Floors, Tobacco Sales Floor Limited and Premier Tobacco Auction Floors. With the advent of contract farming,

**Table 2.** Tobacco production by class

	1995				2000				2012			
	Production		Area		Production		Area		Production		Area	
	Tons	%	ha	%	Tons	%	ha	%	Tons	%	ha	%
Small-scale	3,598	2.0	3,760	5.2	9,258	4.8	11,204	14.6	73,656	53.0	58,317	62.9
Medium-scale	326	0.2	427	0.6	1,051	0.6	834	1.1	36,449	26.0	21,670	23.4
Large-scale	174,728	97.8	68,273	94.2	179,333	94.6	64,448	84.3	29,074	21.0	12,718	13.7
Total	178,652	100.0	72,460	100.0	189,642	100.0	76,486	100.0	139,179	100.0	92,705	100.0

Source: Compiled by the author from Zimstat (2012) data.

Note: Large-scale comprises large-scale commercial farms, medium-scale comprises small-scale commercial farms and A2 farms, and small-scale comprises A1 and communal area farms.

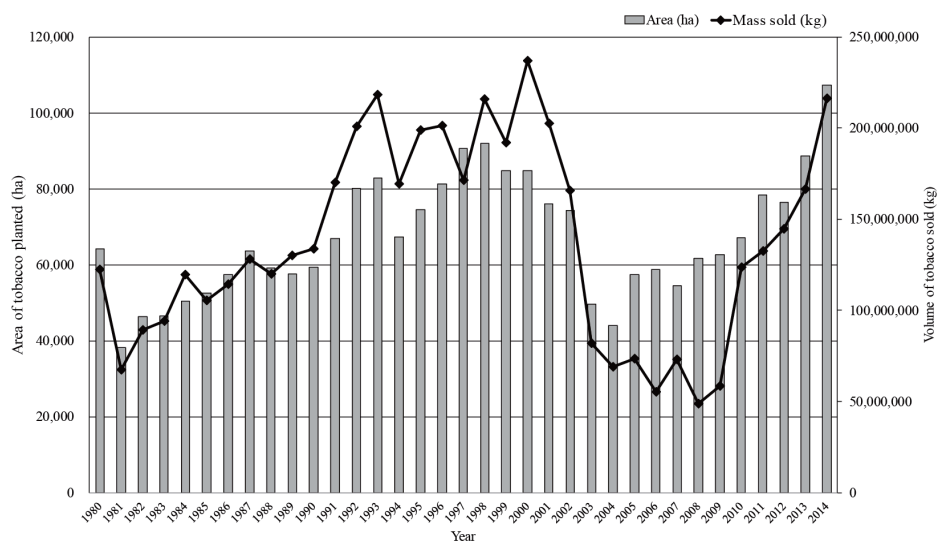


**Fig. 1.** The number of registered tobacco growers since 1980  
Source: TIMB (2014).

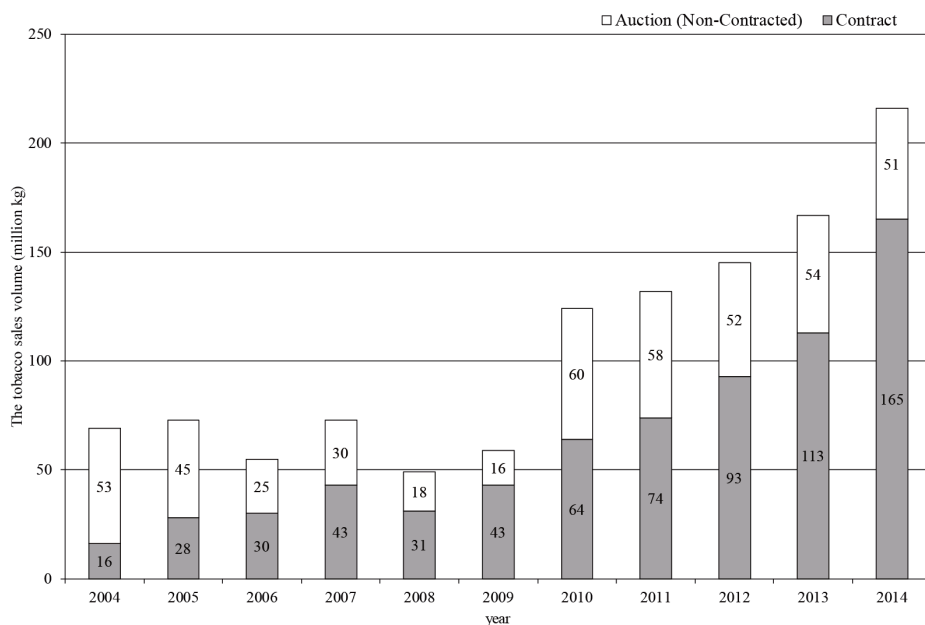
however, growers have been able to choose their own markets, whether the auction floors or under a contract arrangement. With the latter, farmers receive inputs in advance and the contracting company deducts the costs from their sales. After the introduction of contract farming, the number of tobacco growers, the overall area of tobacco planted and the volume of tobacco sales all increased. The expansion of small-to-medium farm classes through the FTLRP and the introduction of contract farming in 2004 have popularized tobacco farming and greatly increased the number of tobacco growers. While there were only 1,547 tobacco growers at independence in 1980, by 2014 there were 87,166 farmers registered as tobacco growers (Fig. 1). Of this total, 31,487 (about 36%) were A1 farmers, and 39,094 (about 44%) were communal farmers (TIMB, 2014). Thus, more than 80% of tobacco growers were small farmers or peasants. Indeed, while the industry was traditionally led by white LSCFs, the peasantry is now the driver of the industry.

Fig. 2 shows the area of tobacco planted and the volume of tobacco sales, which started to climb from an all-time low of about 49 million kg in 2008<sup>(5)</sup> to 216 million kg in the 2014 harvest. The area planted to tobacco has increased even more markedly. In the 2014 agricultural season, the area under tobacco reached its greatest extent since 1980.

Fig. 3 shows the volume of tobacco sold through contract arrangements and tobacco auction floors since the introduction of contract farming in 2004. In 2008, when the volume of tobacco sales was the lowest it had been for several decades, around 49 million kg was transacted, about 36%, or 18 million kg, was sold through the auction floors, and 63%, or 31 million kg, was sold through contract arrangements. In the 2014 season, when the volume of tobacco sales increased to around 216 million kg, about 23%, or 51 million kg, was sold through the auction floors and about 76%, or 165 million kg, was sold through



**Fig. 2.** Area of tobacco planted and volume of tobacco sold since 1980  
Source: TIMB (2014).



**Fig. 3.** Tobacco sales volume by different markets  
Source: TIMB (2014).

**Table 3.** Contracted tobacco production by farming sector (2014)

	Number of Growers		Mass (kg)		Mass (Value, USD)	
		%		%		%
A1 Resettlement	17,918	36.5	42,197,031	26.0	128,656,613	23.0
Communal	21,641	44.0	38,452,893	23.0	115,667,801	21.0
Other	9,584	19.5	84,722,592	51.0	304,116,902	56.0
Total	49,143	100.0	165,372,516	100.0	548,441,316	100.0

Source: TIMB (2014).

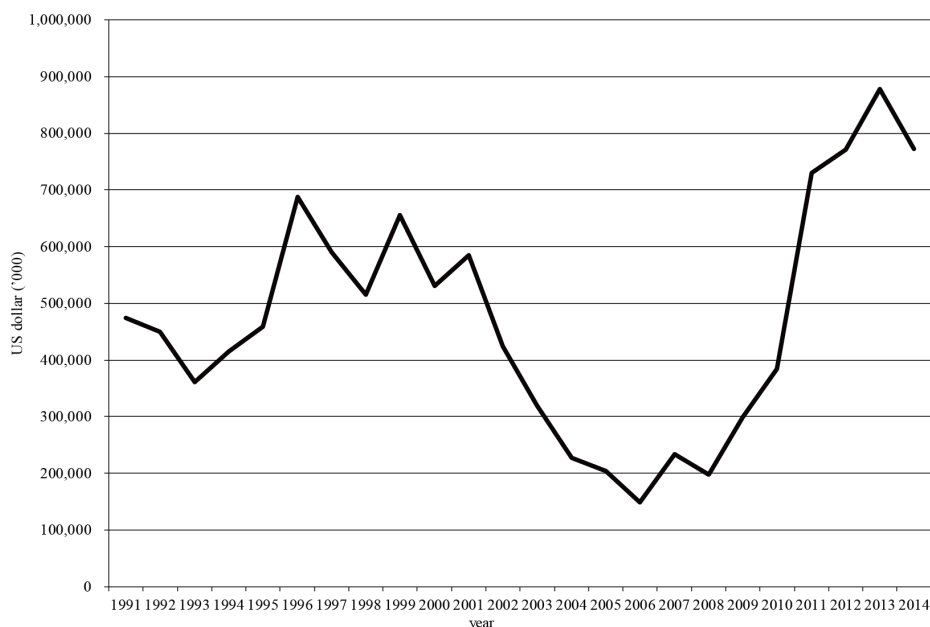
contract arrangements. While the entire volume of tobacco sales grew fourfold between 2008 and 2014, tobacco sales through contract arrangements increased fivefold during the same period. Tobacco sales at auction floors also increased but did not reach as high a level as that produced through contract arrangements. It is obvious that introduction of contract farming has substantially increased the volume of tobacco production in Zimbabwe.

Contract farming arrangements are open to all tobacco growers, from large- to small- scale. While many donors and think-tanks assume that land beneficiaries are inherently incapable of producing agricultural commodities commercially, and accordingly promote the privatisation of land tenure, ostensibly to improve access to credit (Moyo & Nyoni, 2013: 198), international tobacco companies have expanded their operations in resettlement and communal areas in Zimbabwe since the FTLRP.

Among the 87,166 farmers registered as tobacco growers (Fig. 1), 49,143 tobacco growers registered as contracted farmer in 2014. And among the contracted farmers, about 80% of them are small-scale farmers or the peasantry: 36% of them are A1 farmers, and 44% of them are communal farmers (Table 3). Contracted A1 farmers produce 26% of national tobacco crop and communal farmers 23%. These small-scale farmers contribute less than half of the amount or value of national tobacco production.

Some contractors prefer to deal with peasants and medium-scale producers because ‘they are less able to resist lower price margins compared to larger-scale producers, who generally have higher social standing and fare better in procuring inputs using their own income, credit, and subsidies’ (Moyo, 2011a: 957). While the impact of contract farming on small farmers will be discussed later in this paper, their contribution in the industry increased considerably compared with their marginal role before the FTLRP. Thus, the tobacco industry has been transformed and has subsumed various classes and races since the advent of the FTLRP.

Since 2011, Zimbabwe has been the third largest tobacco exporter in the world in trade value, after Brazil and the United States.<sup>(6)</sup> The value of exported tobacco has increased since the mid-2000s and the export value surpassed the levels achieved before the FTLRP (Fig. 4). While the largest volume of tobacco was sold to European Union countries until 2010, China became the biggest buyer of Zimbabwean tobacco in 2011. In 2014, China imported 36% of national



**Fig. 4.** Tobacco export value  
Source: TIMB (2014).

tobacco production (TIMB, 2014).

The FTLRP has brought about a revolution in the tobacco industry in Zimbabwe. The introduction of contract farming opened the door for the peasants to join as tobacco growers. The tobacco industry of Zimbabwe re-evolved in the 2000s, led by these peasants.

## CONTRACT FARMING: THE AGRICULTURAL FINANCE SOLUTION?

Contract farming is not new in Zimbabwe but has been practised through tea, sugar, and cotton production since the mid-1950s (Jackson & Cheater, 1994). Especially after the independence in 1980, the government supported contract farming to reduce the 'dualistic' agricultural structure, peasants versus commercial agriculture (Jackson & Cheater, 1994). Sachikonye (1989) studied contract farming from the cases of tea and sugar in Zimbabwe. And he concluded that 'contract farming is a crucial mechanism in the subsumption of growers to agri-business capital' (Sachikonye, 2016: 89). And he explained that while the contracted growers were much controlled by their contracting companies, the growers were not inferred as 'wage-labour equivalents' or 'disguised proletarians' since they still retained some measure of autonomy (Sachikonye, 1989; 2016: 89).

This survey shows how peasant growers conduct tobacco contract farming



arrangements on the ground. A field survey was conducted in ward 7 of the Marondera district in Mashonaland East between July 2015 and June 2016.<sup>(7)</sup> The research area was chosen, first, for the author's historical interest, in that the land movement in the 1990s started from this ward. The FTLRP was carried out as a result of massive land movements occurred in several places, led by war veterans. And the research area, ward 7, is the first area where the movement was taken place among others.<sup>(8)</sup> A more practical reason is that the researchers found a number of global contracting companies operating in the ward.

In the study area the researchers interviewed 67 contracted farmers; all were A1 beneficiaries, all the farmers have 6 hectares arable land without irrigation systems. The researchers interviewed both contracted and independent farmers to compare their costs and revenues of tobacco farming. The researchers selected the interviewees randomly among the farmers gathered at the public places, such as at communal tobacco barns, at village assembly points, or at shops. The interviews were taken place only with the agreed farmers at these public spaces or at their homestead upon their requests.

The study found four companies operating in the area (Table 4). These companies do not disclose their company profiles on their websites. However, according to an interview with an official of the TIMB,<sup>(9)</sup> two of the four are foreign companies and the other two are local. The former are financed from the U.S., and one of the local companies is apparently producing tobacco for a Japanese company.<sup>(10)</sup> The researchers collected information from 14 farmers contracted under company A, 11 under company B, 13 under company C, nine under company D, and 20 independent (non-contracted) farmers (Table 4).

The researchers inquired how the farmers had made their contract arrangements with the companies. Among the 47 contracted growers surveyed, 38 (or 80%) responded that the contractors came to their areas to recruit them. Seven (15%) said they themselves visited the companies in Harare seeking contract arrangements. One answered that he had been referred to the contracting companies by other farmers in the area. The interview results show that the tobacco companies take an active interest in recruiting small-scale farmers, making regular visits to the area. That seven of the contracted interviewees travelled to the capital, Harare, seeking contracts shows that farmers are not

**Table 4.** Tobacco companies and independent growers in the study area

Company	Number (n=67)
A International (U.S.)	14
B International (U.S.)	11
C Local	13
D Local	9
Independent (non-contracted)	20
Total	67

Source: Author's survey data.

hesitant to work with global capital.

Every company has representatives working on the sites where they operate. The representatives use company cars to visit the contracted growers. Each representative is allocated a large area to supervise, for instance the whole Marondera district, covering 100–150 growers. A representative from Company D said in an interview that the company assessed whether it was feasible to contract with a farmer before the contract was negotiated. Their assessment criteria included the applicants' assets—whether they had tobacco barns and scotch carts, for instance—whether they had debts with financial institutions or others, and the farm soil quality and tobacco productivity. According to the same representative, contracts were agreed only with farmers who could produce more than 1,000 kg per hectare and were not in debt to a bank.

The contracts signed for the 2014/2015 season with company B state that as of the date of signing the grower should have no outstanding debts or liabilities other than to the company (clause 8). Furthermore, the grower 'shall not, without the company's prior written approval, incur any debts or liabilities after the date of execution,' and in regard to the production of the tobacco on the farm, he should not sell, pledge or dispose of assets (clause 8). In clause 18 the grower is reminded not to dispose of or encumber any assets while any part of the debt to the company remains unpaid. The contract, which has 21 clauses, stipulates that the grower should keep his assets in reserve until he repays the debt to the company. In this way the company is sure to collect the debt from the grower's assets even if he cannot make payments from tobacco sales.

The debt in this context refers to the input costs borne by the company (clause 2). Clause 1 provides that the company may deliver inputs from time to time to meet the grower's requirements to produce tobacco. Clause 2 states that upon the supply of any inputs the company and the grower shall sign a delivery slip, which is the acknowledgement of receipt of the inputs and the agreed purchase price for the inputs. Clauses 1 and 2 confirm that the company has discretion to decide the kinds and amounts of inputs to deliver to the contracted farmers.

Table 5 shows the inputs required for tobacco farming and those supplied by the four companies (A to D). All the growers needed to procure the items listed under the inputs column to grow tobacco, whether they were independent or contracted growers. The independent growers sourced the inputs themselves without incurring debts to the companies. All four companies supplied fertiliser, chemicals such as pesticides and fungicides, and tobacco baling materials. Company B arranged transport for the growers at a cost of \$10 per bale. Companies C and D provided labour costs at \$100 in cash per hectare. Company D supplied firewood as well.

The company's representatives are responsible for explaining the details of the contract arrangements when they sign contracts with growers. All 47 contracted growers who were interviewed agreed that the company representatives had explained the contract details, both in Shona<sup>(11)</sup> and in English. They all acknowledged that they fully understood their contracts—that the cost of the inputs, such as fertiliser and agricultural chemicals that they received upon

**Table 5.** Inputs provided by the company

Company	Inputs						Operating costs	
	Seeds	Fertilizer	Chemicals	Firewood	Coal	Baling materials	Labour	Transport
A		●	●		●	●		
B	●	●	●	●		●		●
C		●	●		●	●	●	
D		●	●	●		●	●	

Source: Author's survey data.

**Table 6.** Whether the companies charge interest

Company	Yes	No	Unknown	Total
A	5 (36%)	9 (64%)	0 (0%)	14 (100%)
B	9 (69%)	2 (15%)	2 (15%)	13 (100%)
C	5 (56%)	3 (33%)	1 (11%)	9 (100%)
D	5 (45%)	6 (55%)	0 (0%)	11 (100%)
Total	24	20	3	47

Source: Author's survey data.

signing, was to be deducted when they sold their tobacco. However, none had read the term and conditions. One of the four companies did not make the terms and conditions available to its contracted growers.

Contracted farmers sometimes required paying other costs to their contracted company. According to the term and condition of Company B, the firm provides that interest will accrue on the grower's debt 'at the rate of 3% per annum calculated from the date of each delivery slip on the total U.S. dollar figure reflected thereon' (clause 2).

The interviewees were asked whether they had paid any costs in accordance with their contractual arrangements. Twenty-four, about half, answered that they had been charged for some costs (as shown under the 'yes' column in Table 6), while 20 others said they were not (shown under the 'no' column). The remaining three farmers did not know whether they had been charged anything or not. The 24 were asked whether they knew what they were paying such charges for; 10 answered that they had paid penalties for shipping delays, and eight said they had paid interest on arrears from the previous season's debt. One answered that his input costs were subject to interest charges. The remaining interviewee did not answer the question.

The contract is agreed on the condition that the company will recover the money the grower owes it regardless of external circumstances. The contract does not acknowledge that the company and the farmers are collaborating in a tobacco farming venture. It is simply a loan agreement which is drafted by the company and is subject to interest charges. It is clear from the terms and conditions that the contract favours the company. Contracted growers cannot choose what inputs are to be supplied, and the company charges interest on the

**Table 7.** Motivation for contracting

	Advantage of income	Advantage of securing market	Other	Unknown	Total
No. of farmers	42	3	1	1	47
Percentage	89.4	6.4	2.1	2.1	100.0

Source: Author's survey data.

cost of the inputs. Most of the interviewed growers had only a rough understanding, if any, of the terms and conditions. While half of the interviewees understood that they needed to pay extra costs in accordance with their contracts, they did not know whether the costs were for interest, service fees or penalties, but they signed the contracts nonetheless.

Table 7 shows the motivations of the growers for contracting with the companies. About 90% of the interviewees said that they entered into contracts seeking access to finance to cover input costs without having to spend money themselves. Field data showed that tobacco growers lacking finances were more willing to sign contracts even with interest and other fees charged. Thus, in the absence of the tobacco companies these growers would be unable to access finance. Much less interviewees chose their motivation of being under contract as advantage of securing market. This is because tobacco market, auction floor, is always available for farmers, even if they are not contracted, as long as they are duly registered as tobacco farmers at TIMB. Thus, the peasant farmers often meet financial challenges to secure input costs tend to choose growing tobacco under contract arrangements.

According to Moyo & Nyoni (2013), the volume of agricultural finance, such as loans and aid sourced domestically or internationally, fell sharply throughout the 2000s. The volume of government agricultural credit declined to below \$3 million in 2007, whereas it had averaged around \$25 million per annum between 2000 and 2007. In 2004 it peaked at \$104 million (Moyo & Nyoni, 2013: 235). The volume of private agricultural credit declined from over \$315 million in 1998 to about \$6 million in 2008 (Moyo & Nyoni, 2013). Hyperinflation made agricultural credit much less feasible as the value of money declined daily, or even hourly. While hyperinflation ended with the introduction of a multi-currency system in 2009, it was still difficult for farmers, especially small-scale growers, to secure agricultural finance.

The growers interviewed had no access to agricultural loans from financial institutions such as banks. Table 8 shows that 26% of contracted and 15% of independent growers had family support. Most of them had borrowed money from family members; two growers received remittances from their sons working in South Africa. Table 7 shows that income from family and relatives was not a significant source of income for the study sample. Given the scarcity of agricultural credit for growers, the tobacco contract farming arrangement worked as an agricultural finance solution.

A key motivation for growers to become contracted to companies was simply

**Table 8.** Whether growers have family financial support

	With family support	Without family support	Total
Contracted farmers	12 (26%)	35 (74%)	47 (100%)
Independent farmers	3 (15%)	17 (75%)	20 (100%)

Source: Author's survey data.

to earn cash. While they needed to look for markets for other agricultural products they grew, the market for tobacco was always secure, whether on the auction floors or with the contracting companies. All the interviewees grew maize, some of which they sold to the Grain Marketing Board (GMB). AIAS interviewed a substantial number of growers who still chose to sell some of their maize to GMB, ostensibly to qualify for its input schemes, which require a record of sales (AIAS, 2015: 117). While the GMB offers higher prices for maize, it is largely unable to pay for grain deliveries on time (AIAS, 2015). A contracted grower, Mr Masango,<sup>(12)</sup> explained why he grew tobacco, albeit reluctantly:

I grow a lot of maize but there sometimes is not a reliable market, since GMB does not pay on time. They still owe me a lot of money for the maize I dispatched last year. I also sell my maize through the local market. I sell maize to the people who visit my farm. I actually do not want to grow tobacco but want to concentrate on growing maize, since tobacco takes a lot of money and labour. It also damages a lot of the soil on my farm. But I still need to grow tobacco because of the secured market and reliable cash return (interview, November 7, 2015).

Mr Masango said the availability of a reliable market was another reason for growing tobacco. The contracts stipulate that tobacco sold will be paid for in two business days. In the absence of reliable agricultural markets for maize and other crops, contracted tobacco farming is an attractive option.

## PEASANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF GLOBAL CAPITAL

The contract growers were also polled about their perceptions of the companies they worked with. Twenty-nine of the 47 said they found the agreements to be fair; 18 considered them to be unfair. Did the contracted companies strictly follow their agreements, they were asked, to which 27 replied 'yes' and 19 'no.' Twenty-five had complained to their companies and 22 had simply kept quiet. More than half of the growers thought that the agreements were unfair, while almost the same number said that the companies had complied with the contracts. About half of the interviewed growers said they had complained to the companies.

**Table 9.** Input satisfaction survey

Are the inputs provided by the company enough? (n=47)		
Enough	12	26%
Not enough	34	72%
No answer	1	2%
Total	47	100%

Source: Author's survey data.

**Table 10.** Average cost of growing tobacco (inputs, USD)

	Seeds	Fertilizer	Chemicals	Total
Independent	25	462	92	579
Contracted	25	1,009		1,034

Source: Author's survey data.

## I. Inputs

The interviewees complained mainly about the inputs they received from the companies and the selling price of their tobacco. Table 9 shows growers' satisfaction with the inputs supplied by the companies. Thirty-four of the 47 answered that the inputs provided by the company were insufficient for growing tobacco. They explained that while they received enough chemicals, the fertiliser they received was about half the recommended amount.

The interviewees also complained about the cost of the inputs provided by the companies. The prices of fertiliser and chemicals vary according to amount and kind. Table 10 shows the average input cost of seeds, fertiliser and chemicals spent on one hectare of planted tobacco for contracted and independent growers. The average input cost is \$579 for independent growers and \$1,034 for contracted growers.

## II. Selling Price

About half of the interviewees thought that the prices the companies paid for their tobacco were fair; the same number considered them unfair (Table 11). Approximately 66% of the interviewees said they would negotiate with the companies if they had not already agreed to the prices offered.

Fig. 5 and Table 12 show household-level median income of growers under the different categories of production: contracted growers under each of the four companies and independent farmers. In Fig. 5 the solid line shows the income of the contracted growers under each of the four companies (A to D), and the dotted line shows the income of the independent farmers. The numbers are based on their incomes, after deductions for inputs and other operational costs, such as levies and insurance. However, the figures do not include labour costs, because all the interviewed farmers paid their workers after they had been paid for their

**Table 11.** Peasants' perceptions of selling prices

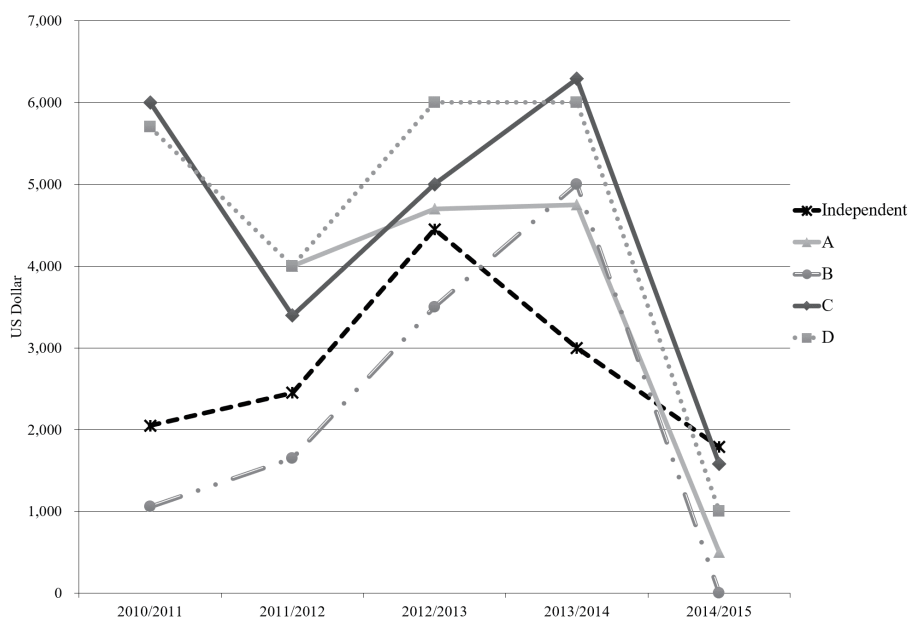
(a)

Do you think the price given by the company is fair? (n=47)	
Fair	23 ( 49%)
Sometimes fair	1 ( 2%)
Unfair	23 ( 49%)
Total	47 (100%)

(b)

Will you complain to the company if you do not agree with the price? (n=47)	
Yes	31 ( 66%)
No	16 ( 34%)
Total	47 (100%)

Source: Author's survey data.

**Fig. 5.** Revenue from tobacco per household (median)

Source: Author's survey data.

tobacco. Fig. 5 indicates that even though contracted farmers realised more income than independent farmers, their average income per household fluctuated widely over the seasons. The percentage change in revenue per season of the contracted growers ranged between -100% and 112%, while that of independent farmers moved in a narrower range, between -40% and 20% (Table 12). The

**Table 12.** Revenue from tobacco per household (median) and the percentage change

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015
Independent (% change)	2,050	2,450 (-20%)	4,450 (-82%)	3,000 (-33%)	1,788 (-40%)
A	N/A	4,000	4,700 (-18%)	4,750 (-1%)	500 (-89%)
B	1,057	1,650 (-56%)	3,500 (-112%)	5,000 (-43%)	0 (-100%)
C	6,000	3,395 (-43%)	5,000 (-47%)	6,290 (-26%)	1,579 (-75%)
D	5,700	4,000 (-30%)	6,000 (-50%)	6,000 (0%)	1,000 (-83%)

Source: Survey data.

revenue of the independent farmers was lower than that of contracted farmers in several years, except in the 2014/2015 season, where median revenue was the highest. That is, the contracted growers, despite facing high input costs, were able to earn a better income from tobacco in favourable seasons, while their income dropped sharply in poor seasons like 2014/2015.

The 2014/2015 season was a difficult time, especially for small-scale tobacco growers with no access to irrigation. The revenue of all the interviewed farmers decreased in the 2014/2015 season, partly a result of the delayed rains and a lengthy dry spell. Some farmers planted at the beginning of the rainy season in November 2014 and their plants suffered damage when no substantial rains fell between mid-November 2014 and the beginning of January 2015. Erratic rainfall also resulted in severe leaching of nutrients from the soil (TRB, 2014). More fertiliser was required to address the problem, and there was premature ripening of the leaf, which required much more labour and thus increased production costs (TRB, 2014: 7). The Tobacco Research Board (TRB) noted that these problems reduced the quality of most of the crop, particularly in the case of small-scale growers, and inevitably affected prices (TRB, 2014). The unfavourable weather affected contracted growers in the research area particularly badly.

A substantial number of the interviewed growers failed to pay the companies for their inputs, which resulted in the termination of contract arrangements during 2014/2015. Some forfeited assets—such as cattle, scotch carts and ploughs—that they had used as collateral at the time of signing the contracts. Many said they had sold assets, such as cattle and goats, to meet their labour costs after failing to secure enough revenue from tobacco sales.

The survey showed that small-scale growers under contract arrangements could earn as much as, or more than, independent farmers when the weather was favourable. However, the income of contracted growers is less stable than that of independent farmers because of their greater dependence on the environment. Their input costs are markedly higher and their losses are correspondingly greater when there are unfavourable rains and poor tobacco prices. Independent farmers are flexible enough to adjust the volume of inputs in line with capricious weather



changes.

The 47 interviewees were asked whether they would want to continue growing tobacco under contract arrangements in the future. Sixteen answered 'no' and 31 said 'yes,' despite the relatively high input costs and unstable revenue. As for the reasons for continuing under contracts, the interviews generally cited a lack of capital to pay for inputs themselves. Thirteen said they needed pre-supplied input materials and four said they had no alternative.

It is clear from the foregoing that contracts between tobacco companies and growers are simply a business arrangement that mainly favours the companies. The grower's income is neither guaranteed nor stable under the contract and many growers forfeited assets to cover debts to the companies or to pay for labour. Nevertheless, almost 66% of the interviewees said they would still want to remain under contract. The following section examines another aspect of peasants' approach to agricultural finance, an approach that helps them to make ends meet.

## DYNAMICS OF RURAL TABACCO MARKET<sup>(13)</sup>

### I. *Makoronyera*

The researchers interviewed Mr Makoni, an Agritex extension worker in ward 7,<sup>(14)</sup> about farmer survival tactics when not enough cash is earned from tobacco. He replied that A1 farmers resort to *makoronyera*, defined in the *Standard Shona Dictionary* (Hannan, 1984) as a 'place out of bounds for ploughing or building.' In practice the term is used to mean an arena where business is undertaken without licences or is illegal, or is conducted by crooks. The term refers both to informal activities and the people who conduct them. In the case of tobacco, *makoronyera* simply means side marketing. Mr Makoni said:

Farmers undertake side marketing by selling their tobacco to *makoronyera*. *Makoronyera* buy tobacco directly from farmers outside the formal markets, such as the auction floors or selling to their contracted companies. The side marketing transactions started just a few years ago. There was no such opportunity before. Side marketing was rampant, especially last year [the agricultural season 2014/2015] since tobacco prices, both at the auction floor and the ones given by the contractors, were very low. It is important to note, however, that any kind of side marketing activities is illegal. *Makoronyera* do business with farmers in this area [ward 7] at night to hide their illegal activities from us. I just saw a truck passing by my house last night, but I do not know where it came from. They were trying to buy tobacco from farmers in our area [ward 7]. I wanted to meet them but failed to do so. It is not allowed to sell or purchase tobacco outside the auction floors or contractor's market. But the farmers, sometimes, feel better doing business with *makoronyera*, since that way the farmer can

earn cash apart from the sales they make at the auction floors or to their contracted companies. *Makoronyera* travel all over the country, wherever people grow tobacco. Since they travel all the way to our farm area, farmers can also save transport costs. It looks like a win-win situation for *makoronyera* and farmers, but side marketing is still illegal (interview, May 17, 2016).

As explained by Mr Makoni, *makoronyera* the TIMB requires growers to be 'properly registered' on its system and to submit statutory returns indicating whether to they choose to sell their tobacco under contract arrangement or on the auction floors; they must keep to their choice of market (TIMB, 2016). Registration with the TIMB enables farmers to purchase seeds and is renewed every year.

Turning to the operations of the *makoronyera*, Mr Makoni said:

*Makoronyera* know where tobacco is grown, where to sell tobacco and whom to talk to at the auction floors. They can travel as far as Karoi to get tobacco. They cover all locations where tobacco is grown in the country and even come to our area! It seems they somehow have their own tobacco registration IDs, even though they do not grow tobacco by themselves. They do not spend a lot of money by growing tobacco. They may not have their own fields to grow it in. But they just buy it from farmers. So they save money and labour... Since they can buy low-quality tobacco from farmers and sell it at higher prices on the auction floors, they are disturbing the tobacco marketing system. Since they are connected with the insiders, they can get better prices for poor tobacco. The transactions run by *makoronyera* also discourage farmers to work hard to grow better quality tobacco (interview, May 17, 2016).

Growers view *makoronyera* as a financial opportunity. An A1 grower, Mr Chikukwa, said that while he delivers tobacco to the contracting company, he also sells tobacco scraps to *makoronyera*<sup>(15)</sup> because he does not expect a favourable price from the company. Another grower, Mr Mazodze, who is still in debt to a contracting company, also sells some of his tobacco to *makoronyera*.<sup>(16)</sup> Being indebted to the company means that he cannot get a cash return if he brings all his tobacco to the company because it would collect all his tobacco revenue to clear his debt. He sells some of his tobacco to the company to reduce his debt, but he also sells some to *makoronyera* to make cash on the side.

Besides making spot transactions on farms, according to two interviews,<sup>(17)</sup> some *makoronyera* also wait for farmers whose bales are declined on the auction floor.<sup>(18)</sup> A staff member of the Zimbabwe Farmers Union commented:

*Makoronyera* wait at a certain point off the auction floors where farmers receive their declined tobacco bales. The bales carried to the tobacco auction floors get declined if they contain several grades of tobacco.

Small-scale farmers definitely do not want to take such declined bales back to the farm, since they would need to pay the transport costs again. Farmers sometimes do not have any money left at the auction floors, because they have used all their money for their transport to come to the auction floors. If their tobacco is declined, farmers are willing to sell their tobacco to *makoronyera* even if they get very low price for their declined tobacco (interview, August 3, 2015).

None of the growers interviewed said they had sold declined tobacco to *makoronyera* at the auction floors, but a representative of the union disclosed that several kinds of side marketing were rampant in the tobacco market. The deals seemed to benefit growers and the *makoronyera* alike. However, the contracting companies find the practice unacceptable because they suffer losses when they fail to receive the expected amount of tobacco from their contracted growers.

## II. Deals among Growers

The survey brought another kind of side marketing to light: transactions among farmers. For example, some contracted growers ask independent farmers to sell their tobacco on the auction floor when the auction price is higher than the contracted price. Likewise, some independent farmers ask contracted farmers to sell their tobacco if the contracted price is higher than what they expect to receive on the auction floor. A contracted grower, Mr Makuvaza, said:

We always communicate with neighbouring farmers to check tobacco prices at several markets. We update the tobacco prices of several markets every day. For example, Company C is now buying tobacco between \$1.20 and \$1.30 per kg. I have not sold tobacco to Company C but I know their price. I am contracted under another company but deliver my tobacco to them only to cover the provided input cost. I can make more money sometimes on the auction floor or through other companies. I also communicated with *makoronyera* this year. I am expecting them to come tomorrow or the day after tomorrow to negotiate tobacco prices (interview, May 17, 2016).

Mr Makuvaza said he wanted to remain under contract for the sake of the inputs he received. However, he sold only enough tobacco to cover the debt he owed the contracting company. The rest was sold to another company, on the auction floor through an independent farmer, or to *makoronyera*. Thus, he used several tobacco markets to obtain the best prices.

Another contracted grower, Mr Mutenda, said:

I ask my neighbour to sell some of my tobacco on the auction floor, since I do not want to give all my tobacco to the company. If I sell all my

tobacco to the company, they just take all my profit and I am left with nothing. I still need cash. So what I do is to keep some of my tobacco aside to get cash from selling it at the auction floor, which I ask my neighbour to do. I know what I am doing is not allowed under TIMB rules, but I still need to send my kids to school (interview, January 9, 2016).

Mr Mutenda said he diversified his marketing to make extra cash, because the costs deducted by the company were high and he would not receive an adequate return. However, he was also aware that such side marketing was not allowed.

Another grower, Mr Chirinda, said:

I am an independent farmer. I sell most of my tobacco to the auction floor, but sometimes I ask contracted farmers to sell my tobacco. Contracted farmers also ask me to sell tobacco on the auction floors. We talk daily about tobacco prices and know the daily price changes (interview, May 17, 2016).

Mr Makoni confirmed that contracted and independent growers communicated daily to find the best market:

Farmers daily get information from their neighbours on the tobacco prices. Farmers always talk with each other to find out the prices, or they can also call TIMB to find the average tobacco price of the day at the auction floors.

Cash transactions are involved when growers deal with their neighbours. Mr Chirinda and Mr Manwa, a contracted grower, stated that farmers wanting to sell their tobacco through a neighbour's market paid \$25 per bale.<sup>(19)</sup> Mr Chirinda said the breakdown was \$10 for administration, \$10 for transport and \$5 for food. The \$25 is paid in advance.

Mr Chirinda said, 'This is a win-win transaction between us farmers since we can raise money by helping others. The farmers who want to sell their tobacco through another channel can also raise some more cash.'

While they take advantage of both formal and informal markets, farmers will not rely on the informal market alone. Mr Makoni noted that growers would not sell all their tobacco to *makoronyera*.<sup>(20)</sup> If they did, the TIMB system would notice that there were no deliveries of tobacco against the seed bought, which might lead to the withdrawal of the growers' licence. Farmers use their registration ID to buy seed, and the TIMB keeps records.

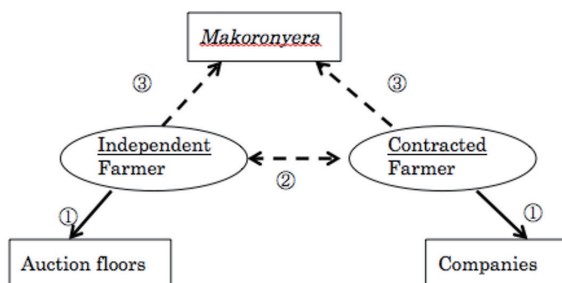
I still sell several of my bales on the auction floor just to survive as a tobacco farmer, and I sell some to *makoronyera* or sometimes I ask my neighbour to sell my tobacco to a company. I want to continue growing

tobacco and earn cash. To do that I need to continue to have my tobacco registration ID (interview with Mr Chikukwa, May 18, 2016).

Mr Makoni said, ‘Selling tobacco to *makoronyera* seems to be a better deal for growers than shipping their tobacco to the auction floors or to the companies. But farmers are afraid of doing too much that is illegal.’

Fig. 6 shows the tobacco market channels the peasant farmers have in the ward 7. This includes both formal and informal channels. The solid arrows indicate the formal market both independent and contracted farmers maintain, and dotted arrows indicate the informal market they also utilize. There are at least three different kinds of tobacco markets the farmers have access to. The first market is the formal channel: the auction floors for the independent farmers and the contracting companies for the contracted farmers. The second market is the informal channel transacted between the farmers: the independent and contracted farmers utilize their own formal market for side marketing. Independent farmers would ask contracted farmers to sell their tobacco at their contracted companies, or contracted farmers would ask independent farmers to sell their tobacco at the auction floors. The third market is the informal channel with *makoronyera*, whom farmers would make spot transactions on farm with. Fig. 6 shows that tobacco market on the ground is informalized but diversified, while they still maintain the formal market channels.

The diversification of agricultural market is also demonstrated by Scoones et al. (2010). With hyperinflation, economic and social instability, and the drastic agricultural transformation through the FTLRP, Scoones et al. (2010) expressed that ‘the formal economy collapsed’ and the local, rural economy became playing significant roles. This study showed that the peasants deal their tobacco with informal marketing practices does not mean that formal market went out completely. Whether we call it as collapsed or compromised, peasants rather



**Fig. 6.** Formal and informal markets  
Source: Author's survey data.

take advantage of the diversified market to maximize their returns, utilizing both formal and informal markets. The rural tobacco market was much more diversified with the peasantization of the agrarian structure and the introduction of contract farming arrangement.

## CONCLUSION

This study first described the tri-modal agricultural structure originally demonstrated by Moyo and colleagues. The examination of this system clarifies that the agriculture of Zimbabwe was peasantized through and after the FTLRP. The result of the FTLRP is shown clearly in the tobacco industry. And the peasantization of the industry was also the outcome of the introduction of contract farming. The peasants are now directly connected to global capital and their output of tobacco surpasses that of any other agricultural crop. While the industry was led by large-scale commercial farmers before FTLRP, the peasants now lead the industry.

Dealing with the contracting companies, however, does not generally benefit the peasants. There is no guarantee that they will achieve a stable income. Some of the contracted growers interviewed had not been able to make a profit because of high input costs raised by the companies and erratic rainfall. However, the peasants do not necessarily suffer under global capitalism. They also take advantage of global capital and are involved in side marketing. While they complete transactions on the auction floors and under contractual arrangements, they also exploit informal markets to maximize returns. Because of the benefits they can enjoy through these diversified but partly illegal tobacco markets, more peasants are willing to grow tobacco after the FTLRP. When they cannot access to any other financial support, the contract farming arrangement with global capital at least ease initial costs for the peasants to start tobacco farming.

Many reports have described the current inflow of foreign capital into Africa as a 'new scramble' (Melber & Southall, 2010; Carmody, 2011; Moyo et al., 2012). The continent was once depicted as being in a crisis (Arrighi, 2002; Melber & Southall, 2010), suffering from a limited inflow of foreign investment. In the early years of the 21st century, however, the continent received more global investment than at any time in the previous five decades (Melber & Southall, 2010).

Inflows of global capital are reaching peasants even in parts of rural Zimbabwe, but far from being oppressed by unfavourable contracts, they exploit formal and informal market opportunities to their advantage. Indeed, the tobacco market has been to some extent informalized by the global economy.

## NOTES

- (1) The author is a former research associate with the Centre for Applied Social Sciences at the University of Zimbabwe and is affiliated to the African Institute of Agrarian Studies. The research in this paper was conducted under the auspices of these institutions and is not related to the author's current occupation as an employee in the economic department of the embassy of Japan in Zimbabwe.
- (2) While FTLRP was the most drastic and redistributive land reform, the country had implemented land reforms since its independent. Moyo (2013) has articulated its land reform programme which started after the independence, into three phases.
- (3) The news reported then is found from the following site. <http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/category/daily/> (Accessed December 30, 2017).
- (4) Zimbabwe became independent in 1980. Until then the country was named Southern Rhodesia under colonial rule, which had lasted since 1923.
- (5) At the peak of hyper-inflation in 2008, when the annual inflation rate reached more than 90 billion percent, it was extremely difficult for farmers to produce cash crops when they could not even use their money (Hayakawa, 2015).
- (6) Data available from the UN COMTRADE database: <http://comtrade.un.org/data/> (Accessed January 5, 2015).
- (7) The ward is about 40 km south of Marondera, the capital of Mashonaland East, and about 100 km south-east of Harare.
- (8) Masuko (2013) and Sadomba (2013) provide the empirical studies of the land movements taken place before the FTLRP by war veterans.
- (9) Interviewed on May 10, 2015.
- (10) Interview with a TIMB official on May 10, 2015. Japan Tobacco International signed a long-term agreement with Tribac in Zimbabwe for the supply of leaf tobacco on June 12, 2009 (JT press release, issued on June 12, 2009 and downloaded from [www.jti.com/download\\_file/395/410/](http://www.jti.com/download_file/395/410/), Accessed October 30, 2010).
- (11) Shona is the local language spoken at the research site and widely in Zimbabwe generally.
- (12) The informant's name has been changed.
- (13) All the names used in this section were changed to protect the informants' privacy.
- (14) Agritex is a department in the Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanization and Irrigation Development. Its main mission is to provide administrative, technical and advisory support to farmers (Zamchiya, 2011: 1095). In ward 7 of the Marondera district, there are four extension field workers who provide agricultural knowledge to farmers and collect agricultural data from them.
- (15) Interview, May 18, 2016.
- (16) Interview, May 17, 2016.
- (17) Interviews with a staff member of the Zimbabwe Farmers Union on August 3, 2015, and with Mr Masango in ward 7 on May 17, 2016.
- (18) Auctioneers can reject tobacco because of its poor quality or in the absence of a buyer.
- (19) Interviews at Mr Chirinda's homestead on May 17, 2016.
- (20) Interview with Mr Makoni on May 17, 2016.

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Author's Name and Address: Yumi SAKATA, 5 Ceres Road, Harare, ZIMBABWE.  
E-mail: sakata.yumi [at] gmail.com