

Contextualizing Household Food Security: A Comparison of Two Villages, Ambros and Maramanzhi, South Africa

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Abstract : Smallholder crop production is a defining factor in achieving food security, particularly at the household level. However, the number of abandoned arable fields is increasing in communal areas of South Africa. While substantial efforts have been devoted to addressing food insecurity in the country, ownership of arable land has not been supplemented with sustainable food production for households. This paper analyses household food security in the context of deagrarianization in two villages, Ambros (Eastern Cape) and Maramanzhi (Limpopo). Semi-structured questionnaires were administered to acquire both qualitative and quantitative data from 106 heads of households. The IBM SPSS Statistics 28.0 computer program was applied to complete data analysis. From the findings of the study, it was evident that compared to arable fields, a greater proportion of households own home-gardens with an average size of 2100m in Ambros and 3400m in Maramanzhi village. The majority of arable fields were abandoned, particularly in Ambros village. Household food access challenges were measured using the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS). This food security indicator revealed that the majority of households were mildly food insecure owing to food shortages emanating from insufficient monthly income and waning household crop production. Food was rated as a very important reason for engaging in cultivation in both villages of the study, but deagrarianization has eroded opportunities for increasing household crop production. Among other possible solutions, this study recommends that the government invest more in agriculture to allow for sustainable strategies that revive abandoned arable land, such as arable fields in communal areas of South Africa, as this could increase food production for households.

Keywords : cultivation, deagrarianization, food security, rural households, smallholder farmers

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