

# Researching Land and Commercial Agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa with a Gender Perspective: Concepts, Issues and Methods

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## Summary

This paper offers critical reflections on the concepts, issues and methods that are important for integrating a gender perspective into mainstream research and policy-making on land and agricultural commercialisation in Africa. It forms part of the Land and Agricultural Commercialisation in Africa (LACA) project undertaken by the Future Agricultures Consortium between 2012 and 2015 and informs the case studies conducted across three countries: Kenya, Ghana and Zambia. The paper compares key gender issues that arise across three different models of agricultural commercialisation: plantation, contract farming and small- and medium-scale commercial farming. It further discusses how concepts and research methods deriving from the literature on gender and agriculture may be applied to mainstream research. The paper highlights the need for an integrated approach to researching gender and agrarian change in Africa. In particular, the existing gender literature provides a rich legacy for researchers of all disciplines to inform their research design and analysis. The authors argue for a more systematic evaluation of the gender implications of agricultural commercialisation across interconnected social levels: household, local community and the wider political economy.

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## 1. Introduction

Since the global food crisis of 2008, research exploring the gender implications of land and agricultural commercialisation has been patchy. However, the importance of incorporating a gender perspective into socio-economic studies of agrarian change has been recognised since the global debates on ‘Women in Development’ of the 1970s and then ‘Gender and Development’ of the 1980s onwards. The debates inspired and were inspired by a body of work from disciplinary vantage points such as anthropology, geography, development studies, economics and law (among others, Mackenzie 1990; 1986; Stamp 1989; Mbilinyi 1988; Manuh 1984; Okeyo 1980; Boserup 1970). In turn, scholar activists in Africa, Asia and Latin America, including the Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD), Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) and more recently the African Feminist Forum, organised themselves in order to disseminate this work more widely and to advocate for relevant policy and legal reform. These scholars drew attention to different aspects of gender relations and women’s subordination in the agrarian political economy. Despite a rich intellectual legacy on gender, land and livelihoods in Africa (Doss 1999), much of the mainstream debates on the contemporary global land rush, agricultural commercialisation and food security have been slow to incorporate a gender perspective or to draw sufficiently from gender scholarship. This paper presents a critical discussion of the concepts, issues and methods that are important for contemporary research and policy on gender and commercial agriculture in Africa as a whole.

Reflecting on this apparent ‘gender blindness’, Doss et al. have observed a prevailing discourse in the mainstream literature that is ‘focused more on uncovering the size and spread of acquisitions and the key players involved than on analysing their effects on different social groups’ (Doss et al. 2014: 3). One consequence of this is that many studies have failed to interrogate the implications of land and agricultural commercialisation for men and women of varying socio-economic backgrounds, and their changing circumstances, especially their family relationships and social status. Doss et al. highlight the value of existing case studies and generic research on gender inequalities in changing systems of land tenure and agrarian production, but point out that there remain striking gaps in the literature in understanding the gendered effects of these changes and their policy implications. To date, gender blindness in the mainstream literature has resulted in a parallel development of gender literature addressing these issues. However, the solution Doss et al. propose is that these gaps require systematic integration of gender analysis into mainstream research (Ibid: 3-5). Such an approach is challenging because it requires researchers across a range of disciplinary backgrounds to be conversant in the concepts, issues and methods that are used within the gender literature on agricultural

commercialisation in order to incorporate them effectively into their own research design.

This paper was originally developed to inform three Land and Agricultural Commercialisation in Africa (LACA) case studies on agricultural commercialisation conducted in Kenya (East Africa), Ghana (West Africa) and Zambia (Southern Africa). However, its critical reflections on the themes arising from the models of commercialisation and countries discussed are also of wider application for research in this field. The over-arching question that the LACA project seeks to answer is: *How does the restructuring of agro-food systems resulting from land and agricultural commercialisation affect agrarian economies and livelihoods in Africa?* Within the case studies three farming models are analysed: plantation, contract farming and small- and medium-scale commercial farming. All three models operate in the three countries, although the history of each country has produced differences in the ways in which the models have developed. This introduces complexity into the extent to which the models can be compared.

This paper contributes to answering the broad question posed by the LACA project by comparing key issues for gender analysis that arise across the three models. These include, in particular, barriers and access to participation; the implications of their labour regimes; and land loss and displacement. The paper also explores how concepts deriving from the gender literature may be applied to research design and analysis. It highlights the implications of different methods for the depth and generalisability of research findings. Finally, it emphasises the need for a more systematic and critical analysis of the gender implications of land and agricultural commercialisation at interdependent levels of household, local community and the wider political economy.

## 2. Methodological issues – why a gender perspective is needed

The importance of a gender perspective was first brought onto the global development agenda in the 1970s with the so-called ‘Women in Development’ movement (Tinker 1990: 30) and Ester Boserup’s path-breaking book *Women’s Role in Economic Development* (1970). The movement as a whole sought to influence development policy by drawing attention to what development needs from women. It was argued that women’s contributions should not simply be viewed in terms of women’s roles as wives and mothers: their productive contributions were also of central importance to the economy. The movement demanded social justice for women on grounds of both equity and economic efficiency (Razavi and Miller 1995). However, at that time it did not seek to challenge underlying structural social inequalities in advocating the importance of women in development (Rathgeber 1990; Mbilinyi 1984).

During this period, Boserup developed models for understanding processes of agricultural intensification as well as contending that gendered divisions of labour were socially constructed. In particular, she analysed the ways in which women's paid and unpaid labour contributed both to household income and to macroeconomic growth and argued for the need to understand women's time use and labour burdens. The importance of Boserup's scholarship for contemporary research on gender, land and agriculture was recently celebrated in an edited collection of papers to mark the centenary of her birth (Fischer-Kowalski et al. 2014). Within this collection, the paper by Behrman et al. (2014) offers a succinct overview of the significance of her work to contemporary debates on land investment and agricultural intensification.

Behrman et al. note that Boserup focused on pre-industrial agriculture and that her ideas were based on a model where agricultural intensification was endogenous with population increases. This is a different scenario from the contemporary rapid intensification caused by exogenous pressures on land from investors and accelerated processes of land titling. Nevertheless the authors observe the continued significance of Boserup's ideas through the work of later scholars on issues which include the non-unitary nature of intra-household resource allocation (Alderman et al. 1995); the positive effect of increasing resources controlled by women on productivity (Quisumbing 1996; Udry et al. 1995; Saito et al. 1994); and the positive impact of women's control over assets on child health, nutrition and education (Quisumbing 2003; World Bank 2001) (Behrman et al. 2014: 194-195).

Whilst Boserup's ideas continue to resonate today, Razavi and Miller (1995) note that by the late 1970s there had been a shift in development discourse. Instead of focusing on women as a distinct social category and women's roles in development concerns, scholarship turned to the need to examine the relational nature of women's subordination with a focus on access to resources and power relations. As Razavi and Miller discuss, an important book by Young et al. (1984), *Of Marriage and the Market*, marked a departure from the deterministic approach of Women in Development towards 'a theory of gender which was integrated into and informed by the general analysis of the world economy' (Pearson et al. 1981: x; see also Razavi and Miller 1995: 13). The effect of the methodological shift towards analysing social relations and gender roles has been to centralise the political dimensions of gender and the range of factors in social relations, such as class and caste, which affect men's and women's positions in social processes. A consistent theme over time has been to gender-disaggregate the analysis of roles as well as access and control over resources (Razavi and Miller 1995: 13). However, it is notable that despite being a relational concept, 'gender' often continues to be used as a term synonymous with 'women'. One effect of this is that there have been few studies that have drawn specific attention to how socio-economic change has shifted the economic

position of men in farming in Africa (Konings 2012: 6), particularly concerning the increased use of male migrant labour in commercialised agricultural systems (Berry 1985).

From the 1980s, studies on gender and agribusiness by Mbilinyi (1988), Mackintosh (1989) and Carney and Watts (1990) were examining the effects of large-scale farming projects on local food farming systems. Mackintosh argued that the most important effects were changes to the socio-economic organisation of rural life and livelihoods across both gender and class. Carney and Watts observed that technical change, agricultural intensification and new labour processes in contract farming systems were all founded on household production and gendered intra-household relations. An intensification of female labour in market-oriented farm and non-farm activities undermined the position of male heads of household as independent small-scale cash crop producers, leading to growing gender conflicts. These studies of the gender implications of agricultural commercialisation are pertinent to contemporary debates, but they have received little attention in recent literature.

Since 2008, there has been a significant absence of gender analysis in the mainstream literature on land and agricultural investment. However, Daley (2011), Behrman et al. (2012), Tsikata and Yaro (2014) and others have continued to develop theoretical frameworks on gender and commercial pressures on land. These scholars frame their analyses in response to the contemporary climate of large-scale land acquisition, titling and agricultural commercialisation. As Behrman et al. (2014) discuss, theoretical frameworks today need to address the gender implications of exogenous pressures on land resulting from these agendas. Concerning land acquisition projects, Tsikata and Yaro (2014) identify four areas that carry gender implications: (1) employment and new income benefits; (2) land holdings and pre-existing livelihood activities; (3) access to the commons and reproductive activities; and (4) the enjoyment of ancillary benefits. They argue that for the projects studied, in all four areas women are being disproportionately affected by losses and are less able to derive benefits.

There are a number of factors that may be attributed to women's relative disadvantage to men in the context of land and agricultural commercialisation. Behrman et al. (2014; 2012) draw attention to the need to analyse the gender implications of titling processes; the changing nature of gendered roles and responsibilities; labour patterns and work burdens; the impacts of mechanisation; and so on. Daley identifies 'women's four-fold vulnerability' arising from commercial pressures on land: firstly, constraints and systematic discrimination in relation to women's access to, ownership and control of land, including protection of their land rights; secondly, systemic discrimination in socio-cultural and political relations, particularly in relation to decision-making; third, women's relative (cash) income poverty *vis-a-vis* men; and fourth, women's general physical vulnerability

*vis-a-vis* men, manifested through gender-based and sexual violence against women (Daley 2011: 6-8). It is also important to note that many male small-scale producers have faced crises of employment and incomes since the structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s. This has led to increased demands on women to provide for cash needs and a transformation in gender relations in many areas and communities. In this context, gender conflicts also arise over challenges to male supremacy, and therefore do not simply represent male-dominant gender-based violence.

### **Three approaches**

While the factors contributing to gender-differentiating effects are already well described in the literature, Doss et al. note that researchers have yet to identify the wider socio-economic implications for men and women of large-scale commercial land acquisitions (Doss et al. 2014: 16). This is equally true in terms of knowledge gaps on the implications of agricultural commercialisation. Within the literature, Doss et al. identify three broad approaches to the study of gender and land based economic activities, which can loosely be described as feminist human rights, feminist liberal economics, and feminist political economy on the basis of their over-arching concerns, i.e. human rights violations; gender equity irrespective of the over-arching economic system; or gender equity within a particular economic system (Ibid; Razavi 2003). Below is a summary and slightly modified account of Doss et al.'s discussion of the three approaches.

Human rights frameworks take as their starting point state obligations to protect and promote women's and men's rights to food, water, work, housing and health, and address gender discrimination in all spheres of life as guaranteed by human rights instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Wickeri and Kalhan 2010; Ikhdahl et al. 2005). These studies have focused on the precariousness of women's land rights under state law within plural legal systems and women's loss of informal interests in land. They also draw attention to gender inequalities that prevent women from enjoying employment and alternative livelihood opportunities in processes of land and agrarian commercialisation and worsen in relation to men.

Liberal economic frameworks take processes of land and agricultural commercialisation as given. They are largely interested only in whether and how these processes either worsen gender inequalities or provide new opportunities for women. They analyse their potential to promote gender equality and thereby boost agricultural productivity and profitability, increase agricultural sustainability, improve food security and nutrition and reduce poverty through empowerment (Meinzen-Dick et al. 2011; Quisumbing 1995). Studies in this tradition provide evidence of changes in land and agrarian relations and explore the efficacy of solutions

to gender inequalities in land tenure systems such as formalisation of land rights through joint titling and registration, and the involvement of women in local land governance structures. They are particularly interested in how customary land tenure systems govern production and reproduction and thereby result in particular gendered livelihood outcomes.

Feminist political economy approaches situate their gender analysis within the contexts of globalisation, economic liberalisation and agrarian change, thus attributing changes in gender relations largely to changes in the overall political economy (Tsikata 2010; Razavi 2003). They argue that the implications of economic liberalisation are generally gendered but locally specific. Some studies have focused on economic liberalisation policies, others on particular developments such as transnational agricultural investments or the construction of large scale transnational infrastructural projects that take land from rural communities. These differences demonstrate the importance of contextual specificities such as the regulatory role and powers of the state in land governance, the bio-physical characteristics of the land and natural resources as well as the economic, institutional and social arrangements for their exploitation. They also analyse how agricultural production systems, specifically land and labour relations, shape the gendered outcomes of land deals.

The differences in emphases of each of the three approaches give them particular strengths and weaknesses. Human rights approaches provide an immediate grid for determining which rights have been violated and what remedies may be sought. Thus, they focus more on outcomes than on the processes and social relations through which rights violations occur. They are also not particularly interested in the preoccupations that underpin policies, and do not sufficiently surface the agency of women and their resistance to the socio-economic processes which violate their rights.

Liberal economic frameworks are strong in the attention they give to micro-processes, particularly intra-household relations shaped by social practices and customary laws. They have tended to be more agnostic in their analysis of the effects of processes such as agricultural and land commercialisation. In some cases they have stressed opportunities that have opened up to women as a result of commercialisation. In other cases they have been more critical of such opportunities or highlighted limitations and factors which make women unable to access these opportunities. In the same vein, their studies of customary laws sometimes highlight women's agency and their efforts to strengthen their position within land tenure systems and agrarian production systems, while at other times they focus on the disadvantages they suffer. Their main weakness is their lack of attention to changes in the larger political economy and other social relations that intersect with gender and thus create differentiation among women.



Political economy approaches are useful for their efforts to combine attention to the details of gender relations within the household and micro-spaces, with the gendered implications of processes within the wider political economy. They are also useful for surfacing the intersections of gender and class and for attention to labour relations in analysing the implications of land and agricultural commercialisation. Their major weakness is the lack of sufficient attention to micro-processes and socio-cultural issues in this analysis. They also face challenges in accounting for both the structures of inequality and the agency of women and other disadvantaged groups simultaneously. Transformative feminism (discussed below) seeks to address this by exploring the interplay of patriarchy and globalisation, conceived as a global capitalist hegemony.

As Doss et al. (2014) have argued, while these strands have different emphases, many studies of gender and livelihoods borrow from all three to analyse both the broader political economy questions and the more specific issues of intra-household production relations, as well as structure and agency in the agrarian political economy.

### **3. Concepts in the study of gender, land relations and commercial agriculture**

While entire communities may operate within a common space, experiences of people living within a community are differentiated by social and economic relations. The literature on gender and agricultural commercialisation discusses ways in which livelihoods within the local agrarian political economy are gendered in their organisation, processes and outcomes. More specifically, gender differentiation is evident in employment conditions, land tenure, control over resources and gender relations within and outside the household. For any study of land and agricultural commercialisation, these differentiations can be surfaced in research and writing by deploying some key concepts which have become staples of gender analysis. This section discusses some of these concepts, drawing attention to how they are understood.

There have been many efforts at definition of concepts in research papers, in the reports of key global policy organisations and think tanks and in the work of feminist activist and policy advocacy organisations. While these have promoted general understandings of concepts, in some cases they have become quite formulaic and shorn of the contingencies and nuances underpinning them. It is important to understand that concepts are heuristic devices to guide research and writing and should not be applied in ways which obfuscate or over-simplify reality. This discussion focuses only on gender concepts. It does not tackle a wide range of concepts which, while relevant to understanding the gender implications of

land and agricultural commercialisation, are used in mainstream research and thus available in other literature.

### **Structure and agency**

Structure and agency are foundational concepts in gender studies, although their meaning, distinguishing characteristics and relationship with each other are somewhat contested. One of the most influential conceptualisations of structure is that of sociologist Anthony Giddens. His dualist theory argues that social structures consist of 'rules and resources', one presupposing the other. Together with agency he argues that these concepts represent 'both the medium and the outcome of the practices which constitute social systems' (Giddens 1981: 27). Some scholars, for example Sewell (1992) see agency as a constituent of structure. In the context of processes of women's empowerment, Kabeer argues that 'structures shape individual resources, agency and achievements' (1999: 461).

In a slightly later review of the literature, Ahearn (2001) interprets agency as a broad concept that cannot simply be equated with free will or resistance. She argues that people's actions are not only constrained and enabled by social structures, as proposed by Giddens (1979). Nor, as Bourdieu (1977) contends, are they constrained by practices and their outcomes, which are reproduced through an individual's own actions, thoughts and perceptions. One bare-bones definition she proposes is 'the socio-culturally mediated capacity to act' (Ahearn 2001: 112). However, she points out that such a definition raises further questions as to where agency is located: within the individual (whether at an intentional or subconscious level), at a collective level, in discourses or in social forces (Ibid: 130). Moreover, forms of agency emerge in varying ways across different social contexts (Ibid: 113).

Agency is often linked to questions of power. For example, Ortner conceptualises agency as

that which is made or denied, expanded or contracted, in the exercise of power ... the (sense of) authority to act, or lack of authority and lack of empowerment ... that dimension of power that is located in the actor's subjective sense of authorization, control, effectiveness in the world. (Ortner 1997: 146)

In the context of gender relations, feminist theorists such as Butler (1990) have examined ways in which new forms of inequality, autonomy and constraint have emerged which do not fit the traditional dichotomies of male domination and female subordination. Social inequalities are constructed and intersect in multiple ways – not just along gender or class lines. Amongst these scholars there has been a move away from traditional theories of patriarchy and female subordination, to reconceptualising gender identities and agency as shifting, dynamic and intersecting with



other forms of social identity and inequalities (McNay 2000).

Linking these concepts to the gender and development literature, Mbilinyi has observed that the earlier WID approach did not fundamentally seek to challenge existing social structures, but instead aimed to achieve greater integration of women into development. As Mbilinyi notes, this avoided 'questioning the sources and nature of women's subordination and oppression and focused instead on advocacy for more equal participation in education, employment and other spheres of society' (Mbilinyi 1984). The later shift in discourse towards an examination of gendered power relations served to highlight the structural inequalities that represented obstacles to women's empowerment, issues of agency and women's access to resources in particular. Post-structuralist feminists have contributed to this debate by emphasising that generic categories of 'women' and 'men' in fact conceal important variations in the vulnerabilities experienced by different social groups (Carr 2008). Multiracial feminists such as Zinn and Dill have further drawn attention to the significance of class, race and sexuality as intersecting social structures that contribute to the formation and reinforcement of social hierarchies (Zinn and Dill 1996). Multiracial feminists in particular explore women's resistance to the constraints of gender, race and class oppression as part of the interplay of structure and agency itself. As Mohanty previously observed, the impact of structures of domination is mediated and differentiated by the nature and organisation of women's opposition to them (Zinn and Dill 1996: 328, citing Mohanty 1991: 13). Lastly, transformative feminists have gone a stage further to explore the interplay of social structures of gender, race and class with patriarchy and global capitalist hegemony. This brings national and pan-African dimensions to the analysis, while recognising the complex dynamics involved. Indeed, Mbilinyi argues that race has become increasingly significant in the structure of power relations in many areas as a result of growing 'foreign' investment in commercial agriculture along the entire value chain (Mbilinyi 2015; Mbilinyi and Shechambo 2015).

## **Gender relations**

Another foundational concept is gender relations, understood as the relations between women and men in society, which do not occur in isolation from other social relations and markers of identity. Social relations may be defined as the structured and systemic interactions of different social groups and individuals within those groups for production, distribution, exchange, consumption and reproduction, which are governed by institutions such as markets, states, civil society and households. Apart from gender, some of the other important social relations within the agrarian political economies of sub-Saharan Africa are class, patron-client, kinship and generation; as well as race, nationality and local citizenship (host-stranger relations)

(Tsikata 2015). In their operation, different social relations intersect and interlock in complicated ways, reinforcing or qualifying privilege, advantages, hierarchies, inequalities and disadvantages – a situation referred to in the literature as intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989). Furthermore, the bases and substance of social relations can change, for example when petty commodity producers revert to subsistence production and free labourers become tied labourers; or when women move from domestic productive work to wage work outside the household (da Corta 2008). Social relations are constituted in economic, social and political hierarchies which enable certain groups and individuals to accumulate material and non-material resources. In the agrarian political economy, these include land, labour, capital, technologies, knowledge, various skills and social and political status (Hall et al. 2011). Thus differences in interests, strategies and power are the hallmark of most social relations in the agrarian political economy (da Corta 2008).

Liberal feminist scholars and others within certain disciplines prefer the term gender roles. This denotes the social and historical constructions of masculine and feminine roles, behaviours, attributes and ideologies, which refer to some notion of biological sex. In discussions of gender roles a distinction is made between gender ascriptive roles, which are occupied by persons of a particular gender (mother, father, aunt, son etc.), and gender bearing roles, which come to be associated with a particular gender (nurse, secretary, farmer etc.). However, the concept of gender roles has been criticised on several grounds. Edwards (1983) for example identifies three of these. The first concerns the concept of 'role', which, as critics have argued, fails to recognise that social relations are more than simply roles and cannot be changed in the manner of roles. Secondly, the term role is seen as part of the functionalist approach to social relations which underestimates their relational and power elements. Furthermore, the analysis of sex and gender as role fails to fully account for the extensive variations in gender across space and time (Connell 2005; 1995; Edwards 1983).

## **The Gender division of labour**

The gender division of labour is an important concept for operationalising gender relations in research. It is concerned with how labour is divided between men and women, the differential value given by society to tasks performed by men and women and how these divisions are seen as natural and functional. These are also intrinsically bound with differential access to and control over resources, discussed in more detail below. The first broad division is between production and reproduction: men are expected to do more production than reproduction, and women are expected to do more reproduction than production. Production is valued and rewarded more in the political economy. Within the spheres of both production and reproduction, there is

often a further gender division of labour, with men expected to do particular kinds of reproductive work and women doing others. While the particular tasks may change from society to society, most societies have clear gender divisions of labour. Even when these change as a result of migration and other socio-economic change, the changes are not recognised and endorsed by societies.

Production refers largely to the activities that produce commodities, which therefore contribute to a country's gross national product (GNP). In agriculture, this would be all the production of food, other produce and services meant for the market and for subsistence, i.e. paid for in cash or in kind. Reproduction, on the other hand, refers to all those activities that ensure the care and survival of a household and therefore a society's human resources: child bearing and rearing of children; sustaining people on a daily basis; and caring for the old, the sick, the disabled and others who find it difficult to take care of themselves (Harris 1981; Beneria 1979). Several authors have pointed out that women are the primary subjects of the reproduction process (also known as housework or domestic work). They have the main responsibility for the reproduction of labour on a daily and generational basis. This often affects their ability to participate in productive activities (Beneria 1979).

The concept of reproduction being discussed here developed from a critique of Marx's theory that value is created only in the process of the production of commodities. It was argued that 'value is created not only by the work needed for the production of commodities but also by the work needed to produce and reproduce labour power as an essential condition for social reproduction' (Dalla-Costa and James 1972; see also Caffentzis 2002; Mackintosh 1989; Harris 1981; Beneria 1979). Reproduction has three aspects: biological reproduction, social reproduction and the reproduction of the labour force. While reproduction takes place within the household, aspects of reproductive work come to be remunerated and therefore counted as part of GNP when they take place in the public arena of state and market (e.g. health care, socialisation of children, family planning services and child care). In poorer countries and particularly in rural areas, however, reproductive activities are mostly carried out on an unpaid basis in the household.

Some studies have argued that the relations of production and reproduction which underpin peasant agriculture are a unity and part of the same social contract. These relations are connected through the centrality of agriculture. Pankhurst (1991) presents this unity as an interaction of gender and class. Her study also highlights the importance of understanding changes in the household and in marriage. In examining long term changes in marriage, she has highlighted the unequal possibilities for men and women (e.g. different experiences of divorce and widowhood) and the tensions and conflicts resulting from these inequalities. The

discussions of marriage also highlight tools of patriarchy, which include law and socially condoned violence, and material insecurity in marriage for women.

It is also important to recognise, as Pankhurst notes, that although gender relations contribute to shaping social relations of production and reproduction, they cannot account entirely for the nature of production relations. Outside marriage, there are other important social contracts, such as contracts between employers and employees regarding both production and reproduction. Other important social relations in this regard are those between households, and between households, capital and state.

### ***The Care economy***

Feminist economists extended the discussion of the importance of reproductive activities to redefining the composition of economies. They described the economy as composed of three interconnected and interdependent spheres: market (private), state (public sector) and care (household and community). This was a significant departure from seeing the economy as two spheres: state (providing social and physical infrastructure and employment, gathering and spending taxes etc.); and market (providing and producing goods and services for profit). There are minor differences between feminist economists in their approaches to this insertion of the care economy. Diane Elson's model is a four sector economy: private sector (formal paid work and informal paid and unpaid work), public sector (formal paid work), NGO sector (formal paid work and volunteer work) and domestic sector (unpaid care work) (Elson 2000). Himmelweit (2001) presents a simplified model based on Elson's, with two economies (paid and unpaid) and three sectors (domestic, public and private).

All agree that the domestic sector provides individual socialisation and capabilities to the public and private sectors, while the public sector supplies both the private and domestic with social and economic infrastructure, and the private sector supplies both the public sector and domestic sector with commodities. The care economy in these models has two parts: one paid and the other unpaid. While the domestic sector provides unpaid care directly to household members and the wider community, the public and private sectors also provide services that contribute to individual socialisation and the production and maintenance of human capabilities. Such services take the form of infrastructural public services or commodities produced for profit instead of unpaid care work within households (Himmelweit 2001).

The care literature makes connections between how the economy values caring services such as teaching and nursing and unpaid care work within households. The value of this approach to the economy has been to 'make visible the invisible'. As Elson (2000) has argued, it makes

women's activities count: counted in statistics, accounted for in representations of work within economies and taken into account in policies. This draws attention to the cost of providing care, which policymakers and others tend to see as natural, easily available and limitless in supply. There are opportunity costs associated with providing care, and the quality and amount of care can deteriorate. This approach also enables the discussion of care work as implicated in gendered poverty (Budlender 2008; 2002; Razavi 2007; Himmelweit 2001).

This approach to the economy is illustrated by Kabeer's (2003) notion of an 'ice-berg view of the economy' which consists of four parts: the visible formal economy where both traded and non-traded goods and services are produced; the less visible informal economy, where goods and services are produced and marketed but undocumented by official statistics; the subsistence economy, where goods and services are produced for own consumption; and the care economy on which all the activities in the other sub-economies rest and where the unpaid work of reproduction and care in the household take place. This ensures the production and productivity of labour power that keeps the entire economy working. Kabeer argues that the relative size of the various sub-economies varies considerably across the world. She observes that the smaller the visible economy and the larger the less visible economy, the poorer the country, and the poorer the households. She also notes that production and reproduction in poor countries are much more 'socially embedded' in family, kinship and community than is recognised by conventional economic analysis.

### ***The household, intra-household and inter-household relations***

There are debates and also disciplinary preferences as to whether we think of this set of functions which are performed within the care economy as reproduction or care. However, there is agreement that much of this work occurs within the household, which in agrarian economies is also the main unit of production. Within gender studies, there is particular interest in the household as a site of production and reproduction. While this is complicated by analyses that focus on the family and on individuals, the household has been important in gender analysis, particularly in surfacing labour and consumption relations as well as power and decision-making. The household is useful for understanding the organisation of production and reproduction and the control of productive and reproductive resources. Analysis of intra-household relations encompasses gender, kinship and inter-generational relations and enables discussions of livelihood strategies, livelihood portfolios of household members and the entire household, and how these are connected (Beall and Kanji 1999; Francis 1998; Koopman 1991; Folbre 1986).

Inter-household relations concern the relationships between households, how they are structured and who is involved in what. This has been discussed in some of the literature as the interaction of gender and class in production (Pankhurst 1991). For example, labour cooperation groups, which are quite influential in rural production, are sometimes structured by gender and age. Sometimes they involve all household members, but they often involve households with asymmetrical relations differentiated by their control of resources. These relations between households are often discussed as patron-client relations because of these asymmetries (Tsikata 2015).

Households have been classified in terms of their resource base and the kind of agriculture they anchor: whether smallholder production or commercial agriculture of different scales; or, to use another classification, whether a household is of the poor, middle or rich peasantry or of petty commodity producers or agricultural capitalists (Harris-White 2012; Pankhurst 1991). This is important because gender relations within households are affected by the location of the household in production relations and their control of productive resources such as land, capital, labour, technologies and skills. Here households are seen not as a unitary body, but as a corporate body with internal dynamics. Studies of commercial farming have observed that the exploitation of family labour, particularly that of wives, is more intensive in households which are poorer than in rich peasant households. In the context of labour intensive crops, this is a particularly important issue for women's capacity for independent production (Von Bülow and Sørensen 1993).

Further important elements for understanding household production and reproduction are the changing nature of marriage, the character of the conjugal contract and how central this is to the organisation of household production. Marital residence patterns, lineage systems and migration patterns are all key variables in understanding the gender relations of production and reproduction within a household (Apusigah 2009; Goebel 2007; Potts 2000; Pankhurst 1991).

### ***Gendered control over resources***

The gendered control of productive resources is an important marker of differentiation between men and women. In many agrarian societies, studies have shown that men often control more resources, e.g. land, labour, capital (both monetary and social), technologies and skills, than women; and also that men have the power to take important decisions as household heads, controllers of lineages, communities, workplaces and ultimately the state (i.e. practically all power structures within a society). Controlling each of these resources

reinforces control over others. Many agricultural tenancies and patron-client relations exist on account of asymmetries in the control of land. It is important to note, however, that such control has not been static, but has shifted throughout historical periods of slavery, colonisation, decolonisation and contemporary globalisation.

One aspect of control over resources is that certain members of the household are able to control the labour power of others. Here, there are clear gender differences in the control of the labour of others and how this is enforced. Strategies of labour control include the use of violence, taking on new wives and divorce, and these have implications for men and women (Goebel 2007). Historical analyses have also uncovered changes in the control of resources and their implications for production relations within the household. Von Bülow and Sørensen (1993) studied the effects of the introduction of tea outgrower schemes in Kenya. In some cases this involved land conversions, where fields that had hitherto been held separately by women and men were consolidated to be used as one larger ploughed field devoted to a new crop such as maize. This development undermined a long history of women's autonomous food production, and reduced them to their conjugal duty to provide family labour (often unpaid) for the production of commodities, with no control over the income from such activities. By contrast, in the context of *ujamaa* (African Socialist) village development programmes in Tanzania, both men and women have held the equal right to be allocated land by virtue of their status as citizens of the *ujamaa* village. Research conducted in south-west Tanzania over a number of years in the 1990s revealed that women at that time sought access to village land in their own right, although in practice this was often subject to their husband's consent (Odgaard 2002; 1999).

Research which takes gender issues seriously has to ask questions about the control of productive resources within the household as well as the household's location and sources of income. In rural production, common property resources are vital to land poor and landless groups. Therefore, studies have to examine what is happening to such resources; whether these are being privatised or enclosed; what this implies for access; and the different ways in which men and women rely on these resources.

### **Gender ideologies**

Gender ideologies refer to ideas and beliefs through which we make sense of lived experiences, which can serve to conceal the conditions and contradictions underlying those experiences. They are important in research on agrarian societies and economies, because they justify the structure of the household, the sexual

division of labour and the control of resources as natural, functional, logical and reasonable. They are perpetuated through the processes by which subjectivity (our sense of ourselves) is culturally constructed. Hence, gendered subjectivity can be seen as constituted ideologically, ensuring the continued reproduction of dominant masculinity and dominated femininity (Mitchell 1986).

In some farming systems, gender ideologies construct some women as non-farmers or unable to do the heavy lifting in farming. Even in situations of extensive and institutionalised male migration in southern Africa, women have not been recognised as farmers. One study, which examined anxieties about male migration and its effects on agriculture, revealed that policymakers and intellectuals did not consider the women left behind as adequate to the task of being peasants in their own right, and in their discourses, implicitly rejected the term peasant to describe women. While their husbands were referred to as 'worker-peasants' (in other studies as semi-proletarians), the women were described as 'farmer housewives' (Potts 2000). In their study of tea outgrower schemes in Kenya, Von Bülow and Sørensen (1993) found that there was a lack of recognition of women's roles within the farming systems themselves and farming communities. This was reinforced by state agencies and producer collectives. While young men were encouraged to become independent tea growers, young and older women were not given this encouragement unless they were operating in groups. Supporting individual women was seen as threatening male dominance within households and control over family labour. This was in spite of the fact that, except for a few rich farmers who employed male full time permanent labourers, family labour, particularly that of wives, was critical to the majority of tea farmers who used family labour wholly or partially.

Similarly, in Northern Ghana, Apusigah (2009) found that women's participation in agricultural production was structured by the cultural appropriation of their labour in two systems of production. In much of the Upper East and Upper West Regions, women were designated as farm hands, while in most of the Northern Region they were seen as non-farm labour. This had implications for their access to productive resources and their livelihood activities and outcomes. In those areas where women were considered to be non-farm labourers, their contributions to agricultural production – which included planting, harvesting, transportation, processing, storage and marketing of farm produce – were designated as helping the male members of the compound or cooking for male farmers and farmhands. This representation of women's productive activities as reproductive work normalised and justified gender discrimination in access to land and productive resources and discouraged their independent farming activities.



## ***Feminisation of the labour force***

As a counterpoint to the social construction of women as 'non-farm labour' within certain systems of agricultural production, the expansion in female employment across developing and industrialised countries has been described as a 'feminisation of the labour force'. In the context of global structural adjustment policies of the 1980s, Standing (1989) observed that deregulation and increased labour flexibility had resulted in a spread of low wage jobs and increased levels of female participation in the labour force, while male participation rates had fallen. In subsequent decades women's labour force participation has continued to rise faster than men's in almost every region of the world except Africa, where it was already high (Kabeer 2003). In addition to demographic changes and increased educational opportunities for men in particular, Kabeer attributes this rise to a 'double feminisation' of the labour force internationally. Women have not only increased their share of employment, but 'employment itself has started to take on some of the "informalised" characteristics of work conventionally associated with women' (Ibid: 65). In particular, production of global commodities is undertaken by women not only as waged employees, but also informally through subcontracted work that is completed within households (Dunaway 2014; 2013).

In sub-Saharan Africa, female labour has remained concentrated in the agricultural sector. Across the models of commercialisation discussed below, it is possible to observe clear gender differentials in working conditions and the kinds of jobs undertaken by men and women within the employed agricultural sector. Significant concerns in the literature on gender and commercial agriculture are the systemic inequality in levels of pay that exists between men and women, and a casualisation of the workforce whereby women have experienced disproportionate reductions in permanent employment compared to men. Yet there are also broader issues, which were identified in the early scholarship on global value chains by Hopkins and Wallerstein (1994; 1977), but have since been neglected. These authors identified four key issues: worker exploitation was largely gendered and racial; it took the form of waged and unwaged, free and unfree labour; labour was often derived from visible and hidden labour surpluses from households; and there was consequent economic devaluation of household-based work (summarised in Dunaway 2014; 2013). In an extensive review of the literature on global value chains, Dunaway highlights that an important issue for analysis is the significance of households as sources of production and reproduction for global commodity chains, as well as the contribution of surplus production by households to the world economy. She observes, however, that with some exceptions (for example Bair 2010) more recent research has paid scant attention to these issues. She concludes that less than one percent of scholars in this field have 'gendered' commodity or value chain analyses,

with an overall failure to assess the linkages between households and commodity chains. In the context of African agriculture, Catherine Dolan is one of the few scholars to analyse the relationship between the household and global value chains from a gender perspective. Her work on the Kenyan horticulture industry is considered further in the discussion of issues in plantation and contract farming (below).

## **4. Issues for researching gender, land and models of agricultural commercialisation**

The foregoing discussion of key concepts has shown that livelihoods within the agrarian political economy are gendered in their organisation, their processes and their outcomes. The literature also reveals that the implications of agrarian change for men and women vary across different models of agricultural commercialisation and crop types as well as local socio-economic and political contexts. Economic liberalisation has been shown to produce different effects on women's farming across regions within countries, while intra-household relations within rural households are also shaped by local land tenure practices (Whitehead 2009). It follows that local social norms and practices, gender ideologies and gendered control over resources must all be taken into account when considering the gender implications of agricultural commercialisation in any particular context (Dancer and Sulle 2015; Smalley 2013: 59; White and White 2012; Oya 2010; Mate 2001).

This section extends the discussion of concepts by comparing key issues of gender differentiation that arise across three models of agricultural commercialisation: plantation, contract farming and small- and medium-scale commercial farming. The discussion focuses particularly on the development of these three models in the LACA case study countries: Kenya, Zambia and Ghana. Whilst acknowledging the differences between the countries in terms of their historical developments in agriculture we seek to derive common themes and issues surrounding livelihood opportunities, working conditions and land use as points of comparison. These include barriers and access to participation, the implications of their labour regimes and land loss and displacement. While all three models exist in the three case study countries, Kenya is best known for its plantations, and Ghana and Zambia for outgrower schemes. Small- and medium-scale commercial farming is found in all three countries but is the least researched, particularly concerning issues of gender. The Zambian government is now promoting a new national block farming initiative. This model incorporates outgrower schemes and a nucleus estate, but also shares some of the features of the commercial farming model. The ability

to draw comparisons across countries and models is, to some extent, limited by the fact that certain issues and models within each country have been more extensively researched than others.

Smalley (2013) provides the most comprehensive and recent account of the three models and readers are encouraged to refer to her paper. Plantations are the largest of the three in terms of land-holding and generally require significant capital investment. They typically grow a single cash crop. Farming often involves a high level of mechanisation and relies on resident and/or migrant labour hired on a permanent, seasonal or casual basis (Smalley 2013). In the contract farming model farmers supply produce to a central buyer on a contractual basis. While there is substantial variation in business models within contract farming (Oya 2012) often the central buyer also owns a nucleus estate. Some large nucleus estates operate on a similar basis to plantation farms. The third model includes commercial farming on small- and medium-scales. Commercial farming areas have seen a resurgence in recent years across a number of African countries. There is no precise definition of 'small' or 'medium' here, although one important differentiating factor is the way in which land for farming is accumulated by different social groups. Jayne et al. (2015) draw a distinction between 'emergent' farmers – African urban-based investors who own medium-scale enterprises of five to 100 hectares (Jayne et al. 2014; Sitko and Jayne 2014) – and full-time, rural-based, small-scale commercial farmers who typically started out in agriculture and cultivate around five to ten hectares of land (Mellor 2014). A third type of commercial farm is a planned block of farms operating on a commercial basis in geographical contiguity to one another (Smalley 2013). The LACA project encompasses all three types.

### ***Gender issues across the three models of agricultural commercialisation***

#### *Plantation model*

Of the three countries, Kenya's plantation agriculture is the most extensive and longest established, with large-scale farming accounting for 30 percent of marketed agricultural produce, including tea, coffee, maize, wheat and livestock. By comparison, plantation agriculture in Ghana has developed significantly over the last decade. Since 2005 it is estimated that over 36 companies (the majority of which are led by overseas investors) have gained access to more than two million hectares of land in Ghana – equivalent to 91-99 percent of the total area that is both agro-ecologically suitable and potentially available for agriculture (Schoneveld 2013). The majority are biofuel investments, but there are also a large number of oil palm, sugarcane and cereal crop investments. In

Zambia, mining and copper have historically been the mainstay of the national economy, while the country's agrarian history has been characterised by the development of state farms and farm 'blocks', rather than the extensive plantation agriculture seen particularly in Kenya. The biggest plantation farm in Zambia is in fact a mixed plantation-outgrower farm: Zambia Sugar PLC.

Historically, plantation agriculture in Africa has been associated with expropriation of land, resulting in displacement of local farmers and loss of commons. This has occurred particularly in Kenya, where only around 16 percent of the country's land area is of high or medium agricultural potential with adequate and reliable rainfall (GoK 2010). Pressure on land in agricultural areas has produced land conflicts and land grabbing, both before and since the country's political independence in 1963 (Manji 2014; 2006). Since the 1990s in particular, many tensions over land in Kenya have been the result of the disappearance of large tracts of public land to international corporations and investors, to the benefit of wealthy Kenyan elites (O'Brien and KLA 2011). This has been made possible by Kenya's highly centralised administrative structure for land tenure which enables allocation of public land, including common property resources, for commercial agricultural leases (Ibid). Population displacements have affected men and women in terms of the physical relocation of their homes and conversion of areas used by pastoralists to agriculture. Loss of the commons also has a negative impact on women's livelihoods, where they represent an important source for food and fuel gathering.

Since the 1960s, sugarcane has been amongst Zambia's most significant commercial crops. The nucleus estate of Zambia Sugar PLC (now owned by South Africa-based Illovo Sugar Ltd) in Mazabuka District, Southern Province is the largest agricultural operation in Zambia, comprising an area of 29,160ha as at 2013. Prior to the establishment of sugarcane production the land was forested and used by local Tonga pastoralists as grazing land. The land was originally alienated to settler farmers, but subsequently taken over by the government and converted to leasehold land. More recent expansions of the nucleus estate have led to further local population displacements and conflicts between the company and local village communities (Richardson 2010).

Plantation agriculture has also frequently been associated with poor wages and working conditions, although developments in recent decades present a more complex picture. Wage work on plantation farms may take the form of permanent, seasonal or casual employment. Increased mechanisation has proved significant both in terms of the nature of work undertaken and changes in the opportunities for men and women, as well as job security for workers. Increased mechanisation may have the effect of excluding women

from the labour market, or including women where it has replaced the need for manual labour that may be particularly heavy or strenuous (Dolan and Sorby 2003). Companies often rely on migrant labour (particularly young male migrant labour) as well as local labour. One example is Zambia's ETC Bio Energy in Copperbelt Province which uses a high degree of mechanisation in its plantation model. A recent case study found that fewer women than men are employed in waged employment and women hold a bigger proportion of seasonal, lower paid jobs as compared with men. Men hold the majority of fixed term or permanent positions (Wonani et al. 2013).

With feminisation of the workforce, a number of studies have noted poorer women with limited livelihood options represent a 'captive labour pool' for farms and plantations (Smalley 2013: 59, citing Mbilinyi 1988; Hayami 2010; Lansing et al. 2008; Cramer and Pontara 1998; Devereux et al. 1996; Loewenson 1992). However, different crop types require different labour tasks to be undertaken. Where tasks are associated with a particular gender this can often result in a gendered division of labour in the workforce. For example, Dolan observes Kenyan export horticulture as being a mixed-gender activity, unlike food crop production within households for local markets, which has often been regarded as a female activity. However, there exists a clear gendered division of labour within the sector. Dolan's study of Kenya's commercial French bean industry found that men were the majority of employers, while women were the majority of employed workers. This gendered division of labour is reinforced by horticultural companies who have regarded women as 'better bean pickers' than men due to the need for care in handling fragile produce (Dolan 2001). In the sugarcane sector there is strong gender differentiation between young male cane-cutters, and weeders, the majority of whom are women and older men (Dancer and Sulle 2015; Mbilinyi and Semakafu 1995). This illustrates the diversity of issues concerning gender and employment across different crop types, business models and socio-economic contexts. Linking back to the concepts, this variation may be understood by analysing how gender ideologies affect processes of recruitment on plantations from the perspective of both employers and employees. However, the trend towards casualisation and the phenomenon of feminisation of the workforce means that in the plantation model, overall women are experiencing lower levels of pay and less job security than men.

These findings are echoed in a 2015 study on gender and sugarcane at Kilombero Sugar Company Ltd (KSCL) in Tanzania (Dancer and Sulle 2015). In the context of employment practices at KSCL a longitudinal comparison with data collected in 1992 by Mbilinyi and Semakafu (1995) revealed that privatisation of the sector has resulted in a workforce one-quarter of its earlier size, and a relative decline in women's permanent employment within the company. The majority of job cuts have been to permanent positions, with the impact on women employees being proportionately greater than men.

Across the workforce proportionately more women occupy the lowest paid jobs, with few reaching senior grades. Job cuts have been compensated by a 'casualisation' of the workforce in favour of seasonal migrant employment, such as cane-cutting, largely only attractive to young men (Dancer and Sulle 2015). The largely male casualisation of the workforce in the African sugarcane sector is in contrast with the relatively high proportion of women employed on a casual basis in Kenya's horticulture industry, including cut flowers where women comprise the majority of non-permanent workers.

One response to concerns over poor working conditions in the African horticulture sector has been the development of codes of conduct for supply chains. These came from European supermarkets, importers, exporters and trade associations in the 1990s. Much has been written about gender and global value chains in Kenyan horticultural production (Nelson et al. 2007; Hale and Opondo 2005; Tallontire et al. 2005; Barrientos et al. 2003). Today, in some sectors codes of practice and strong unions have had a positive impact in improving working conditions for some employees on plantation farms. However, Barrientos et al. (2003) note that the primary focus of the codes has been on improving the working conditions of permanent workers, rather than temporary, casual, migrant or seasonal workers. Large-scale plantation agriculture has been shown to have a particularly negative impact on intra-household gender relations, labour patterns and wage inequalities (White and White 2012; Sajhau and Von Mural 1987). However, Said-Allsopp and Tallontire (2015) observe that with the exception of Dolan's work, the literature on codes tends to focus on employment conditions rather than the impact of participation in global value chains on household dynamics. At this point it is worth reiterating Dunaway's observation (discussed under feminisation of the labour force above) regarding a dearth of gender research which analyses the significance of households, in particular 'invisible' or unpaid household labour, as sources of production and reproduction for global commodity chains (Dunaway 2014; 2013). Research needs to consider the impact of surplus production on intra-household relations and budgeting, and any gender-differentiating effects. A study of changes over time would also aim to discover how any pre-existing family farming and other livelihoods in the plantation area were affected by involvement in the plantation model.

#### *Contract farming model*

Contract farming encompasses a diversity of schemes in practice. A comprehensive survey of the literature on contract farming by Oya identifies three main models: outgrowing, nucleus-outgrower arrangements and tenanted state schemes. Within these models he identifies multiple variations. These include: scale; labour intensity across different crops types; differences in ownership structures, from fully state controlled schemes to



public-private partnerships and private agribusiness control; a diversity of contractual arrangements with outgrowers; differences in target markets (export or local); and distance from final distributor in value chains (Oya 2012: 15-16).

Of the three case study countries, Zambia and Ghana are best known for their contract farming, including outgrower schemes. In Zambia, the country's Sixth National Development Plan (GoZ 2011a) aims towards the development of 100,000ha commercial farm blocks and large-scale irrigation schemes in each of Zambia's ten provinces. Each will include an investor-run core venture estate and processing facility, with outgrower schemes forming an integral part of the business model (Nolte 2012). Ghana has also seen significant acceleration in its outgrowing schemes over the last decade (Tsikata and Yaro 2014). Government policies have been aimed towards the promotion of both large-scale commercial farming and nucleus-outgrower schemes (Schoneveld 2013). The literature on gender and contract farming discloses three main issues: the extent to which men and women are able to access livelihood opportunities through contract arrangements; gender-differentiating features of the labour force, both within outgrowers' households and on nucleus estates; and the impact on livelihoods and land loss within households. Case studies from all three countries and elsewhere illustrate the importance of researching the local socio-economic and political context as well as land tenure practices when considering issues of gender differentiation within the model.

In some outgrower schemes, farmers (often smallholders) enter into a contract with the company which requires them to use their own land to grow the commercial crop. This represents one of the biggest barriers to women's access to contracting, particularly in areas of customary land tenure where land is often owned or controlled by men. There is a general consensus within the literature on contract farming that in areas of commercial pressure on land in particular, women with limited access to resources have tended to lose out in contracting arrangements (FAO 2011; Schneider and Gugerty 2010). Since 1995, Zambia has administered a dual land tenure system of state land and customary land, with the possibility to convert customary land into state land, which is seen as attractive to investors. There are no precise figures on the proportion of land held under customary and state tenure. Official figures from 1964 put state land at 6 percent; however, it is estimated to be as much as 10-20 percent today (Nolte 2012). Statutory laws of succession in Zambia are not gender-discriminatory; however, male inheritance of land prevails through patrilineal and matrilineal customary practices of inheritance, which vary considerably across the country. Women have usufructory interests in family land, although (depending on local customary practices) many do not inherit land from their husbands (Adams 2003). This means that in practice most women do not own land that they could then convert from customary

to state land (Spichiger and Kabala 2014). Zambia has sought to address this constraint on women's participation through a national policy of allocating 30 percent of state land to women (GoZ 2006a; 2006b; 2011a), which has resulted in an increase in land allocations to women in some areas (Mwenechanya 2011). However, given the relatively small proportion of state land, the picture this presents is that many women may still be constrained in their ability to contract into commercial farming arrangements in areas outside state land.

Recent case studies from Ghana highlight how local socio-economic and political contexts, including local landholding practices, are significant factors affecting participation in outgrower schemes. In Ghana approximately 78 percent of land is held under customary tenure, 20 percent is state-controlled and 2 percent is under shared ownership (Deininger 2003). Registration of individual landholdings acquired under customary law was first introduced under the Land Registry Act 1962 (Act 122) and extended under the Land Title Registration Act of 1986 (PNDC Law 152). However, many people acquiring these lands did not take up land title registration for a variety of reasons. These included lack of access to land registries, cumbersome and expensive procedures and institutional inefficiencies. In contrast to Kenya and Zambia, there had been no significant land law reforms in Ghana until the Land Administration Project (LAP) – a fifteen year programme of land tenure reforms instituted in 2003 by the Government of Ghana under the direction of the World Bank. LAP sought to harmonise land policies and legislation with customary law through: undertaking institutional reform and capacity building for the land administration system; establishing an efficient, fair and transparent system of land titling, registration and valuation; issuing and registering land titles in selected urban and rural areas; and instituting innovative methodologies, including community level land dispute resolution mechanisms (World Bank 2003).

The limitations of the statutory law regime have meant that changes over time in Ghanaian land tenure have taken place at the local level through the actions of Traditional Councils and chiefs, as well as lineage heads and elders. Chiefly authority over land in Ghana emerged from a colonial compromise of indirect rule, which allowed traditional leaders to receive rents from 'stranger' farmers. Their 'allodial' rights over lands continued following independence (Berry 2013). Chiefly power in Ghana remains significant due to the informal government 'policy of non-interference' (Ubink 2008). Schoneveld and German's 2014 study reveals that in practice statutory law mechanisms do not provide sufficient protection for customary usufruct rights and compensation for land loss.

Today, the customary tenure systems of northern and southern Ghana are distinctly different. In northern Ghana land acquisition by smallholders is mainly through settlement, inheritance and gifts. Political power and custodianship of the land is concentrated in the hands

of Traditional Councils, comprising chiefs, village elders and sometimes *tendamba* ('earth priests'). The land itself is controlled by patrilineal kin-based groups. Generally, women can use, but cannot inherit land. In southern Ghana land is 'owned' by chiefs, families or stools, but controlled by matrilineal and patrilineal lineage heads, whose members have rights to use the land subject to continuing obligations (Goldstein and Udry 2008). Here sale, leases and share contracts are also important modes of acquisition.

There is no formal legal obstacle to women acquiring land for agriculture through land markets. However, there are no specific provisions in the various pieces of land legislation which address the cultural and economic factors that make it difficult for women to acquire land in practice. The gender division of labour in agriculture assigns the clearing of land to men, an act which also establishes the usufructory interest, which is also known as the customary freehold. This disables women from acquiring the usufructory interest in land and growing permanent crops such as palm oil and cocoa (Minkah-Premo and Dowuona-Hammond 2005). Therefore, in many households, women as wives generally access the land of their husband's lineage for growing non-permanent crops, such as tomatoes, peppers and groundnuts, whilst also providing labour on their husbands' lands. They may also acquire land to farm through the village chief with their husband's support. This gender differentiation is most pronounced in Northern Region where only 4.4 percent of women own agricultural land, compared with 20.5 percent in Ashanti and 18.6 percent in Brong Ahafo and Western Regions (Oduro et al. 2011). However, there is a need for some caution in identifying certain crops as 'men's crops' and others as 'women's crops' in practice. A study by Doss (2002) indicates that although there are gender-based cropping patterns in Ghana, with men more heavily involved in cash crop production than women, women are involved in the production and sale of all the major crops. A particular factor affecting this appears to be the marital status of women.

The two case studies of the Integrated Tamale Fruit Company (ITFC) in Northern Ghana have assessed the gender implications of the mango company's nucleus estate-outgrower model (Tsikata and Yaro 2014; 2011; King and Bugri 2013). ITFC's landholding is relatively small (552ha). Company land had previously been owned by 23 male farmers and their families. Some commons areas were also converted into farms. As a consequence, fallow land that had previously been cultivated by women became permanently cultivated under the control of male family members. To become outgrowers, farmers must form a group of ten farmers and acquire a continuous plot of ten acres, which is tested by the company as suitable for mango production. The company provides expertise and inputs in exchange for 30 percent of the proceeds of the farm. Each farmer is expected to grow 100 mango seedlings per acre.

The studies found that the production system and land tenure arrangements within the outgrower scheme meant that few women were able to participate directly in it. King and Bugri 2013's study reports that 12 percent of 1,200 company outgrowers were women. This is higher than average in Ghana where women represent 2-10 percent of members in mango producer groups, despite the fact that women's access to land is considered lower in the north than the south, where the majority of mango producer associations are based (King and Bugri 2013). Registration is on an individual basis rather than by household and chiefs make land available for mango cultivation by any community member. However, women's access to outgrowing is also limited by the requirement for secure access to land, which many do not have under local customary tenure practices. Outgrowers are required to register with a bag of maize, which also constitutes a barrier to entry for women in Northern Ghana, where maize is generally cultivated on family farms controlled by men who also have control of the barns in which the maize is stored for household consumption and sale (Apushigah 2009).

The Tanzanian case study of Kilombero Sugar Company Ltd provides an illustration of a local socio-economic context where customary land tenure practices are not a significant feature of local landholding. Instead, local *ujamaa* village governments have historically adopted a gender-equitable allocation of plots to men and women. Here the proportion of women participating in contract farming is relatively high. The study found that female registered outgrowers in three of the local cane growers' associations averaged 42 percent (Dancer and Sulle 2015). In this case, farmers were still required to grow sugarcane on their own land. The study found a number of possible factors to account for the level of women's participation. Village *ujamaa* policies were one factor. Some couples were strategically seeking to maximise the chances of their cane being harvested in the face of limited quotas by registering plots of household land in both the husband's and wife's names with different cane grower associations. It was also more commonplace than was the case in the past for outgrower contracts to be transferred into widows' names upon their husbands' deaths. (Dancer and Sulle 2015). The contrasting pictures from Ghana and Tanzania highlight the importance of researching the local socio-economic and political context and local land-holding practices as a preliminary to analysing the gender implications of contract farming in a particular location of study.

The Zambian company Kaleya Smallholder Company (KASCOL) illustrates how local socio-economic barriers to entry for women may be changed where land is given to outgrowers by the company. KASCOL operates on a nucleus estate-outgrower model. It is located in Mazabuka District, Southern Province and supplies sugarcane for processing to Zambia Sugar. A distinctive feature of KASCOL's business model is its Fair Trade certification. In contrast to the outgrowing model described above, KASCOL sub-leased a quarter of its

4,314.9ha to outgrowers (Mujenja and Wonani 2012; Wonani et al 2013). Women represent 27 percent of KASCOL's registered outgrowers (higher than the 2-12 percent of female outgrowers in Ghana, but lower than KSCL in Tanzania). Although no new allocations are taking place, this has been seen as a gender-inclusive policy because as well as removing one of the biggest obstacles to women's participation it provided women with the land to cultivate sugarcane alongside their existing food crops. KASCOL's outgrowers' contracts also include a succession clause enabling both men and women to inherit land, and fire and rain insurance (Wonani et al 2013).

KASCOL is one example of a company's attempts to introduce inclusivity into its contract farming business model. Inclusive business models have been seen as increasingly important in mitigating the potentially adverse effects of agricultural commercialisation on vulnerable social groups (Lahiff et al. 2012; Cotula and Leonard 2010; Vermeulen and Cotula 2010). From a gender perspective, Daley and Park (2012) have argued that an inclusive business model would feature equitable access to resources, livelihood opportunities and participation in business negotiations and family decision-making processes. Wonani et al's study did not explore the impact of these landholding arrangements on women of different marital status but it does suggest that where women are registered as outgrowers they have a strong voice in household decision-making. It also suggests that the lower proportion of women smallholders in sugarcane production as compared with men may be due to women's reduced access to unpaid family labour. It appears that women are less likely than men to turn over domestic plots for food production in favour of sugarcane. Women's participation in governance and selection structures is also lower, while there is greater diversity in women's income strategies.

In terms of labour practices within the model, in areas of extensive outgrowing many poorer and younger people who are unable to contract into schemes themselves look for work on other farms, such as weeding, fertiliser and pesticide application or harvesting. In Ghana, farmers who cannot afford to employ labourers also sometimes enter into share contracts with individuals. Historically share contracts (including share cropping) were associated with securing labour for cocoa production in Ghana's Forest Zone. Such contracts often took the form of an informal verbal arrangement whereby a landlord granted a tenancy in exchange for a portion of the produce at harvest time (Sarpong 2006). Today share contracts are used in oil palm and citrus growing (Amanor 2001). Leases and share contracts are now becoming more common in commoditised areas of Northern Ghana, leading to the erosion of kinship-based land interests (Awumbila and Tsikata 2010; Apusigah 2009). This has implications for women's access to land where gendered customary ties to the land are loosened, making sharecropping open to women. However, Higgins and Fenrich argue that because women are not

perceived as farmers of cash crops and have other household responsibilities, they are likely to have more limited contracts for short-term crops, weeding and maintenance. The verbal nature of contractual arrangements can also create insecurity in the terms of tenure (Higgins and Fenrich 2012).

Labour practices on nucleus estates in contract farming also disclose issues of gender differentiation, particularly concerning feminisation and casualisation of the workforce (as discussed under the plantation model). ITFC in Ghana employs men and women on its estate, but there is clear gender segmentation of work. Both studies found more women than men were employed as casual workers, while more men than women were employed as permanent workers. King and Bugri's study highlights gender inequalities in waged jobs. Although women secured around 40 percent of waged jobs in the company, many women worked in mango packing units. Women's jobs were generally paid less and were less secure than men's. Women were also under-represented in managerial and supervisory roles (King and Bugri 2013).

A third theme for gender analysis is the impact of contract farming schemes on livelihoods and gendered control over resources, including land within households. Studies since Boserup (1970) have highlighted how expansion in cash crop production usually has the effect of increasing women's workloads overall, while women's bargaining power within the household often declines as most cash-crop income is retained by men (among others: Daley and Park 2012; Evers and Walters 2000; Warner and Campbell 2000; Darity 1995; Mbilinyi and Semakafu 1995; Carney and Watts 1990; Mackintosh 1989). The case studies of ITFC in Ghana discussed above reveal an increase in women's workloads as a result of being engaged in household agricultural production in addition to providing planting and harvesting services on their husbands' mango orchards, cooking for the family, working as hired labour, processing and trading in groundnut oil and flour and harvesting natural products.

A further consideration for research is the gender-differentiating effect of land titling schemes on contract farming arrangements. It is well documented that in Kenya neo-liberal titling initiatives since the 1990s have had a particularly negative impact on women's land tenure security, where most titles have been registered in the names of male household heads and women have lost much of the management and control they previously had over the land (Joireman 2008; KLA 2004; Ensminger 1997; Mackenzie 1993). One consequence of Kenya's land titling policy has been that companies operating in Kenya have shown a preference for contracting with male heads of households on the basis of tenure security (Dolan 2001). In doing so they have reinforced gender ideologies and capitalised on the traditions of productive labour within the household, where women's livelihoods are inseparable from family relationships and their role as

care givers (Razavi 2003; Dolan 2001). Smith (2014) argues that this remains the case under ethical trade structures, where gendered norms, stereotypes and roles continue to permeate smallholder farming practices through the feminisation of labour markets and control over land, crops, labour, income and decision-making in the household. In her 1994-96 study of French bean production in Kenya, Dolan (2001) observes that cultural norms of the 'good wife' combine with gendered patterns of land ownership and control over income in both smallholder and export contract farming.

Dolan argues that the practice of contracting with male heads of household not only places control of revenues from commercial crops in the hands of the head of the household, but also reduces women's sources of revenue from other crops that had previously been planted on the land for the family and for sale in local markets (Dolan 2001). Von Bülow and Sørensen's (1993) study of Kenyan tea outgrower schemes (discussed in concepts above) found similarly that there was a lack of recognition of women's roles, despite the fact that they played a crucial role as labourers within local tea farming systems. These links between production, reproduction and trade and consumption have been re-emphasised in more recent research (Smith 2014; ActionAid 2013).

#### *Small- and medium-scale commercial farming*

There is limited literature on the commercial farming model (in its various forms), and a dearth of research on its gender implications. Within the LACA countries, under Ghana's local land tenure system, small- and medium-scale commercial farmers must either lease or enter into sharecropping arrangements with other local farmers if they do not already own the land themselves. Ghanaian farmers are increasingly turning to high-value fruit production, particularly mangoes, as cocoa prices fall. In Kenya, land values have risen rapidly with land scarcity in fertile agricultural areas. Contemporary commercial farming encompasses a variety of crops, including coffee. However, as with the plantation model, horticulture represents the most lucrative crop for export and is the most viable option for 'emergent' farmers who have accumulated sufficient capital to purchase land for medium-scale production.

Zambia's Mkushi farm block provides one illustration of an established commercial block farming area. In Zambia, land for block farms is given out by the state and its specialised agencies, who provide infrastructure to facilitate the opening up of block farming areas. Mkushi farm block itself comprises commercial farms of varying sizes, acquired by farmers from Europe and other African countries, as well as native Zambians. The block was originally set aside in the 1950s for tobacco production but has now become Zambia's breadbasket (Chu 2013; GoZ 2011a; Woode et al. 1979). It produces the largest proportion of Zambia's wheat (40 percent) and soybeans (21 percent) and is the country's sixth largest maize producer (GoZ 2011b).

In her evaluation of the three models, Smalley discusses that whilst bearing similarities with the contract and plantation farming models, commercial farming areas across many African countries have certain distinctive characteristics. They share similarities with plantations in their requirement for intensive levels of capital investment, including mechanisation, but are less likely to practice monoculture, typically engaging in mixed farming and growing a diversity of crops as well as keeping livestock. Smaller commercial farms also often make intensive use of seasonal labour. In terms of value chains they are less vertically integrated than plantations, but are largely export focused. There is also considerable variation in the socio-economic background of land owners within commercial areas. Farms of various sizes may be owned by settler farmers, rich peasants, capitalist farmers or rural entrepreneurs, depending particularly on the history of land tenure and allocation. Different types of farming require different 'entry costs'; however, the largest of the commercial farms tend towards the highest levels of capital intensity, while smaller farms are most reliant on waged labour (Smalley 2013: 11-12).

From this analysis, three main issues arise for researching the model with a gender perspective. Firstly, there is little research on waged agricultural workers in Africa, despite the poor and hazardous working conditions often associated with the profession (Smalley 2013: 34; FAO/ILO/IUF 2007; Cramer and Pontara 1998; Kydd and Christiansen 1982). As in the plantation model, more research is needed on the working conditions of male and female seasonal and casual labourers whose employment may often go unrecorded on official lists. These labourers are repeatedly left out of statistical analyses by international agencies, governments and researchers (Oya 2013a). A further important area for investigation concerns the social background of men and women who undertake waged employment on commercial and plantation farms. A study by Oya and Sender of women waged workers in Mozambique found a strong relationship between labour-market participation and female divorce or widowhood. The authors found a correlation between divorced and widowed status of women and opportunities for access to better quality employment. They suggest that this trend may be explained by the complexity of gender relations, patriarchy and paternalistic control within the family and labour market participation often found in developing countries (Oya 2013a; Oya and Sender 2009).

Secondly, research is needed on the gender-differentiating effects of levels of input and investment required to enter commercial farming. This includes access to land and other forms of capital, as well as the capacity to hire labour or use family labour (in the case of smaller commercial farms). This raises again the issues discussed under the other models, of gendered access to resources within families, gender ideologies and differentiation of permanent, casual, seasonal, paid and unpaid household labour.



Thirdly, given the export focus of commercial farming, a gender analysis is also required of the implications of global certification standards for local commercial farmers, including Fair Trade and phyto-sanitary standards. The investment costs associated with meeting these standards are less challenging for large-scale farmers, but represent further barriers to entry for small- and medium-scale commercial farmers. Research is needed on how men and women face these challenges in practice and any associated social and economic consequences at the micro-level of household and local agrarian economy.

In her evaluation of the three business models, Smalley suggests that commercial farming is the most likely to create local linkages and stimulate local agriculture (Smalley 2013: 54-55). One hypothesis that could be explored in further research is that the gender implications of this model bear similarities with outgrower schemes and plantation farming, but that the stronger local connections, reduced monopsony power and diversity of produce in commercial farming may militate against the more extreme gender-differentiating effects.

#### *Issues for further research*

A clear theme in the literature explored above is that local socio-economic and political contexts as well as local land tenure systems produce variations in gender-differentiating effects across the three models. Those who have access to resources, including land, labour and technologies, are in the strongest position to take advantage of commercial opportunities and will benefit the most from them. Gender is a major determining factor in this.

Across the three countries, many women lack tenure security – whether through formal title or under customary tenure systems – and this inhibits their access to resources and constitutes a barrier to entry into contract farming and small- and medium-scale commercial agriculture. Gender ideologies where women's farm work is regarded as reproductive labour are also a contributing factor to the low proportion of registered women outgrowers in some areas. A comparison of ITFC in Ghana, KASCOL in Zambia and KSCL in Tanzania demonstrates that where women gain access to their own land from the company or through local land tenure arrangements, the proportion of female registered outgrowers is higher. A critical issue in contracting therefore is to consider the pre-existing land tenure arrangements in any given context, alongside company policies. Tenure arrangements are linked to local gender ideologies, customary laws and administrative practices as well as intra-household relations, and will be a significant factor for men's and women's abilities to enter into the business model.

In terms of labour, for both the contract farming and commercial farming models a gender analysis is needed on the resources base and distribution of resources; as

well as organisation of production and reproduction and the gender division of labour in value addition, processing, marketing and transportation. In the context of medium-scale commercial farming and plantations, much has been written about the impact of ethical codes of practice on the working conditions of permanent employees. However, more research is needed on the feminisation of the agricultural workforce and the connections between households and global value chains. Relatively little attention has been paid to the working conditions of casual and seasonal workers, where women are often in the majority. This is a difficult area for research as the workforce is continually changing and often undocumented. However, it is essential for providing a balanced picture of the working conditions for all employees and any gender-differentiating features and implications.

Across all three models, the transition from food crop to cash crop production has consequences for intra-household relations, food security and the gendered division of resources, including land and labour. Research questions need to explore in detail what is happening at the household level in terms of reproductive activities and their weight within the three models, and to move beyond the paradigm of gender-differentiating practices and effects. Particular issues concern the reallocation of land, as well as the redistribution of family labour and time use, bargaining power and control over resources. Secondly, in terms of the local agrarian economy, gender analyses should include trends in accumulation. Other issues include labour patterns, particularly migration and casual labour systems, land allocation and agricultural tenancies. In addition, most existing studies are production-centred and do not provide insight into associated non-agricultural activities, such as value addition and distribution of produce. Thirdly, research is needed on the implications of institutional change and macro-economic and sectoral policies, and their effect on labour demand, particularly in small- and medium-scale commercial farming and plantation agriculture. None of these three levels of analysis can be fully understood in isolation from the others. To achieve a fuller understanding of agrarian change from a gender perspective requires analysis of the interlinkages between changes at the level of household, local economy and wider political economy.

## **5. Research design and methods**

Most of the recent discussions on gender, land deals and commercial agriculture in Africa have not taken gender analysis as their starting-point (Doss et al. 2014). Rather, they have drawn upon data on gender that has been collected as part of more general studies – for example, the series of FAO studies on large-scale land acquisitions across four countries (Daley and Pallas 2014), and Tsikata and Yaro's research on commercial land deals

in Northern Ghana (2014). Whilst these studies have generated insights into the gender implications of agrarian change, studies that place gender at the centre of the analysis may go further in terms of their methodological foundations, research design and methods employed.

Arguably one of the most important contributions of feminist research to knowledge has been the attention it has drawn to the pervasive influence of gender divisions on social life (Maynard 1994: 15; Cook and Fonow 1986; Bowles and Duelli Klein 1983). At the same time, a frequent criticism of feminist methodologies has been that they contain an inherent bias (towards women), in contrast to what is often perceived as neutral positivist empiricist science. Whereas empiricist methodologies formulate hypotheses which are then tested (objectively, it is claimed) to assess their validity, feminist research as a whole makes no claim to value-free science. Indeed, it does the opposite. In particular, as standpoint feminist Sandra Harding has argued, the distinctive power of 'feminist-inspired' research lies in the researcher using women's experiences to generate her research questions and designing research *for* women, with the researcher placing herself in the same critical plane as the subject matter of her research (Harding 1988). There is a considerable diversity of approaches within the body of feminist research; however, feminist scholars have always responded to the positivist challenge by pointing out the fallacy of objectivity in science in practice. As such, a major contribution of feminist methodological approaches has been to highlight the importance of reflexivity and awareness of one's own bias as part of the process of conducting *any* research.

Maynard (1994) has witnessed a shift in emphasis in the methods employed by feminist researchers since the 1970s. In the early waves of feminism the focus was almost exclusively on qualitative data collection, such as semi-structured and unstructured interviews, which were regarded as more appropriate for the kinds of knowledge sought to illuminate subjective experiences and meanings in women's lives. In contrast, quantitative research that collected so-called 'objective' or value-free social facts was seen as 'masculinist' and avoided. However, as Maynard notes, recent years have seen growing use of mixed methods by feminist researchers. Mixed methods are now being seen as desirable for achieving breadth and depth in data collection, as well as strengthening the validity and generalisability of research findings. From a policy perspective, quantification of data may also aid understanding and add political weight to findings on the scale and significance of a particular social issue (Ibid: 11-14).

Each of the different research methods has its own strengths and limitations. On the qualitative side, ethnographic research over an extended period of time goes deepest in terms of its study of norms, gender ideologies, power relations, social dynamics and livelihood patterns across the seasons. Other richly

detailed forms of qualitative research, such as extended life histories, also afford an understanding of intra-household relations, long-term processes of diversification and changes over time in livelihood strategies across different generations. As Thompson describes it, what other sources may neglect, but oral history can reveal is 'the changing patterns of millions of conscious decisions' by individuals. Thus, the 'cumulative role of the individual' must be incorporated into our understanding of 'the mechanics of social and economic change', and how political, macroeconomic and social forces interact with individual lives (Thompson 2000: 298-299). However, the depth and time-consuming nature of life histories means that they cannot provide data from which to draw generalised conclusions.

Most policy-driven research on gender and agriculture is not allocated long enough periods of fieldwork to be able to collect a substantial amount of in-depth qualitative data. Consequently, most time-limited studies have used other more rapid methods of qualitative data collection, such as key informant interviews, focus group discussions and semi-structured or unstructured interviews. These approaches are particularly useful for generating hypotheses for further, more in-depth research. Studies which rely purely on these methods of data collection will often gain important insights into issues concerning livelihoods, labour and local land tenure. However, they are unlikely to be able to analyse issues such as intra-household relationships, gendered division of labour and control over resources in depth. Indeed, as Oya observes, there are inherent dangers in 'fast fact-finding' or the 'literature rush' that he has observed happening in an attempt to debunk simplistic narratives favouring private investment in agriculture (Oya 2013b: 518; see also Edelman 2013).

Household surveys represent the most frequently used quantitative approach to data collection on African agriculture. These also permit the analysis of intra-household issues. However, whilst many surveys, particularly national household surveys, frame their questions on the basis of a unitary household model, gender-oriented research has repeatedly challenged this unitary model and its consequent lack of gender-disaggregated data (Quisumbing 2003: 8-9). In order to analyse intra-household dynamics and decision-making, household surveys must be designed to ask specific questions about allocation and control of resources, productive and reproductive activities and decision-making within the household. To assess the impact of agrarian change and commercialisation on individuals' labour burdens, surveys should also include questions on time use and resource allocation. In the context of global value chains, Dunaway (2014: 68) offers a useful list of questions, which seek to draw out the relationships between households and commodity chains, paying particular attention to gender impacts and changes in women's work. Household dynamics also need to be taken into account in the conduct of the survey itself. In recognising the non-unitary nature of the household,

simply speaking to 'the head of the household' will not produce data on the interactions between different members of a household and their experiences of time use and resource allocation. Indeed, the concept of the 'household head' serves to reinforce the notion of unitary decision-making which gendered analyses seek to challenge.

In the context of researching African commercial agriculture, Tsikata has argued that a rigorous methodological approach to the study of gender requires a systematic analysis of gendered analytical categories, including sexual division of productive and reproductive labour; access to, ownership of and control of resources; and gender ideologies of labour and exploitation (Tsikata 2009). If we map the key gender concepts discussed in this paper against the three feminist approaches to the study of gender identified by Doss et al. (2014) – human rights, liberal economics and political economy – it can be seen that a blend of research methods is required in order to interrogate the broader and deeper questions concerning relationships within households, the local community and the wider political economy.

Sender et al.'s study of women wage-workers in rural Mozambique is one example of how a mixed-method approach can be used in the context of a study on gender and agriculture. The research was conducted between 2002 and 2003 and began with pilot interviews and qualitative discussions with rural Mozambicans. This informed the design of a detailed quantitative survey, which was undertaken with a total of 2,626 men and women. From this a small purposive sample of women was identified in order to address cross-cutting and repeating questions arising from the survey in greater depth. Detailed life histories were conducted with women which enabled the researchers to triangulate the data and present high quality evidence based on both qualitative and quantitative data (Sender et al. 2006). Multi-method approaches to data collection therefore involve an on-going process of analysis and reflexivity. Whilst initial research questions or hypotheses may be posed, the initial stages of qualitative data collection may often take a grounded approach, with the researcher engaged in a continuous process of reflection and review. Sender et al. describe an iterative process in the development of their questionnaire, with further questions being generated after the initial tabulation of data from the survey. Hence the research analysis moved between qualitative and quantitative analyses, with one set of data informing questions for another.

For each type of data, the way in which it is interpreted has an important bearing on the validity of research findings. This is a particularly important consideration for mainstream research on agriculture, where a gender perspective has frequently been either left out of the research design or the analysis. Subjectivity arises in the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. This requires self-reflexivity and awareness of one's own social and cultural background in the interpretation of data,

particularly when analysing factors such as gender, age, ethnicity and other forms of social status. One of the particular challenges of the life history genre in gaining social understanding lies in interpreting and representing a story without distorting the narrator's meaning or losing it in the author's own theoretical analysis, or as Thompson puts it, 'wrenching the evidence' from the interviews and reassembling it to view it from a new angle (Thompson 2000). This is also a risk for the researcher interpreting other forms of qualitative data, and indeed, weaknesses in interpretation can also occur in quantitative data analysis. The researcher must be alert to the influence of survey design on survey results. The process of analysis must include reflection on the limitations of the survey itself. Questions that in hindsight were not framed to elicit critical data, or omit an important variable, need to be taken into account in the analysis and findings made.

## 6. Conclusions and recommendations

This paper has sought to provide critical reflections on how concepts, issues and methods derived from the literature on gender may be used to analyse the gender-differentiating effects of agricultural commercialisation on agrarian economies and livelihoods in Africa. Existing studies on gender and agriculture may orientate towards one or more of the three approaches highlighted in this paper. However, analysis of both the broader political economy questions and the more specific issues of intra-household production relations, structure and agency requires a blended approach that borrows from all three.

The case studies and contrast between the land tenure systems and models of commercialisation across the three LACA countries highlight the importance of the local socio-economic context in any analysis of gender differentiation. Land tenure security is critical for men and women in terms of their ability to access markets and take advantage of new livelihood opportunities. However, in all three countries women's ability to access and control land has been limited by both customary laws and practices, and statutory land titling systems that have reinforced gendered power relations in their implementation. This serves as a barrier to entry in commercial and contract farming models, and may also marginalise women in their control over resources within the household in the transition towards cash crop production. These shifts in dynamics and allocation of resources within the household require careful analysis.

The phenomena of feminisation and casualisation of the workforce have been well documented, but recent attempts to improve the working conditions of plantation employees through codes of practice have focused more on permanent employees. Research therefore needs to pay attention to the working conditions of casual and seasonal workers, where women are often in the majority. There are practical challenges in collecting data from a workforce that may be less visible on company records



or that changes with each season. However, it is critical for obtaining a balanced picture that the labour, livelihoods and household relations of this group of workers is brought to the fore in research on gender.

This paper has emphasised the importance of social norms, laws, local structures and institutions, as well as representations of production and reproduction within the household, for studies of gender and agriculture. The case and country studies illustrate the circular relationship that exists between household organisation, local economy and wider political economy, and the need to reflect on the interconnected nature of the changes taking place at different levels. Moving forward, research needs to consider the impact that national agendas for agricultural commercialisation are having on men's and women's livelihoods, the gendered division of labour within and between households and control over resources. Researchers also need to study the wider socio-economic implications of these micro-level changes in gender relations in the context of contemporary processes of agrarian transformation.

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