

A critical analysis of A2 Fast Track Lowveld sugar cane farms in Zimbabwe in global value chains: interrogating the lives of farmers and farm labourers

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ABSTRACT

The sugar cane industry has for many years been a lucrative business with a booming global market. In Zimbabwe, the sugar cane industry is no exception, as it has been regarded as one of the most efficient in the region and even in the world. The sugar cane farms and mills in Zimbabwe are located in Triangle and Chiredzi, in the south-eastern part of the country and they are under the ownership of Tongaat Hullet and the Zimbabwean A2 farmers. The focus of this is on the A2 fast track farms in Hippo Valley, which are now owned by black farmers but as out-growers for Tongaat Hullet. The crucial question addressed in the thesis is whether the A2 sugar cane farmers and their workers, located at the production end of the sugar cane global value chain, are benefitting from their involvement in this value chain. A number of scholars argue that global value chains lead to economic and social upgrading at the production end of the chain, based on thoughts contained in modernisation and trickledown theory. There is an assumption, then, that integration into the global economy leads to economic upgrading which translates into social upgrading. In drawing upon critical global value theorists, bolstered by the Marxist perspective, considers the importance of a more critical view of global value chains in relation to the sugar cane industry in Zimbabwe, with the particular focus on A2 farms. Thus, the main objective of the thesis is to consider the lives and livelihoods of A2 sugar cane farmers and sugar cane workers through a case study, in the context of global value chains and arguments around economic and social upgrading. This is pursued through a case study of six A2 farms, which involved interviewing farmers, supervisors, and both permanent and temporary workers. The thesis concludes that there is no significant evidence of social upgrading amongst the labour force, and that the A2 farmers are in constant tension with Tongaat Hullet in seeking to engage in economic upgrading of their status as commercial farmers.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines Lowveld sugar cane farms in Zimbabwe in the context of a critical analysis of global value chains. In particular, the thesis examines A2 (fast track land reform) sugar cane farmers and their workers. There is a specific focus on questions of economic and social upgrading with reference to the lives of both farmers and farm workers on the A2 sugar cane farms. Therefore, this thesis seeks to establish whether these farmers and their workers are experiencing upgrading (whether economically or socially) by being integrated into the global economy through sugar cane value chains. To do this, the study will also consider the livelihoods of the workers before and after the start of the fast track land reform programme (FTLRP) in the year 2000, and the ways in which the A2 farmers have sought to establish themselves as sugar cane farmers since the early 2000s. The purpose of this chapter is to give a brief introduction to the thesis, including the broader context for the research, the thesis objectives and the research which was undertaken on the case study of A2 sugar cane farmers and workers in the Lowveld.

1.2 CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

The sugar cane industry has been in existence for many years and it has become a successful and booming industry in the global economy. This industry is widespread in different countries and sugar cane has been used to produce sugar and now, more commonly, it is being used for producing ethanol, with Brazil being the leader producer of sugar cane. The global sugar cane value chain consists of growing, harvesting, transport, milling, processing, transport, storage and marketing. In many countries, cane land is often owned and controlled by profit-focused milling companies (Higgins et al., 2007). The world sugar price is volatile and the price trend has been downwards in recent years, despite increasing costs of production. In this context, seeking to maximise value at all points along the global sugar chain becomes a source of contestation.

The Zimbabwean sugar industry is regarded as one of the most efficient and, given intense competition globally, low-cost, high-output sugar cane operations globally, with the Lowveld operations of particular importance (Scoones et al., 2017). The remote Lowveld sugar cane plantations exist in the Triangle and Chiredzi areas, with about 80% of Zimbabwe's sugar cane being produced at two large estates, namely, Triangle Sugar Estate and Hippo Valley Sugar Estate (Sikuka, 2017). A South African company (Tongaat-Hulett) owns 100% of Triangle and

50.3% of Hippo Valley. The sugar that is produced in Zimbabwe is also exported to other countries. The main export destinations for Zimbabwean sugar are the United States, European Union and countries within southern Africa (mainly Botswana) (Sikuka, 2017).

Historically, half of Hippo Valley was farmed by white private sugar cane farmers who, since the fast track programme in the year 2000, have been replaced by A2 black commercial farmers. Under fast track, 11 million hectares of land in Zimbabwe changed hands in a massive property transfer from white commercial farmers (Sachikonye, 2003). This transfer included two land resettlement models, A1 plots for small-scale farming and larger A2 tracts of land for commercial agriculture.

During fast track, just over 800 white farms at Hippo Valley were designated as A2 farms for purposes of sugar cane production. These A2 farmers received these farms through applications made to the Ministry of Lands and Rural Resettlement. The farmers come from diverse backgrounds and they have now gained access to high-value irrigated land with infrastructure; as well, they 'inherited' a significant number of skilled sugar cane worker from the former white farmers. They are expected to pay the local municipality for irrigation water as well as transport operators for moving their sugar cane to the sugar mills owned by Tongaat Hulett. They also pay Tongaat Hulett for chemicals and fertilisers amongst other charges they incur. As such, these A2 farmers sometimes complain that the prices pegged by Tongaat Hulett do not allow for a significant profit margin (Scoones et al., 2017).

Gukurume and Mushuku (2017) argue that the sugar industry is extremely important for the growth of most of developing economies such as Zimbabwe. These Lowveld sugar estates are said to have the potential to produce over 3 million tons of sugar cane per year, while A2 farmers have the potential to produce 1.4 million tons (Esterhuizen, 2012: 4). However, Esterhuizen (2012) notes that the full potential of sugar cane production is not being reached, such that Tongaat Hulett established initiatives (with European Union funding) for rehabilitating and restoring sugar cane plantations to maximise production. This particular project is providing inputs on loan to A2 sugarcane farmers to replant cane, assisting with tillage services and offering agricultural extension services. These initiatives are meant to nearly double the sugar yields per hectare of A2 farmers.

Traditionally, agricultural labourers on commercial farms and plantations (including before FTLRP) have been subjected to vulnerable and dire working and living conditions (Rutherford, 2001). Permanent workers, sugar cane cutters and other labourers on sugar cane farms are not

exempt from this, including workers on contemporary A2 sugar cane farms, as Gukurume and Mushuku (2012) show in relation to the Triangle sugar estate in Chiredzi. Sugar cane farms employ both permanent and temporary labour, with casual labour sometimes largely feminised. This is because women are preferred by farm owners for their docility, obedience and ‘nimble fingers’ (Gukurume and Mushuku, 2012:3). Sugar cane workers live in extremely small houses with many not having access to electricity and clean piped water, which compromises their health. Overall, they live precarious and survivalist lives.

This thesis will use a critical Global Value Chains (GVC) framework, as bolstered by a Marxist perspective, to examine the productivity and success levels of the A2 sugar cane farmers and the livelihoods and working conditions of the workers. Many liberal scholars, in line with modernisation theory, tend to argue that the integration of the national economies of the global south into the worldwide capitalist system (including through global value or commodity chains) leads to economic upgrading which translates to social upgrading (Gereffi and Lee, 2016). However, such a claim is contested by critical GVC and Marxist theorists. Though the thesis does not analyse the entire sugar cane global value chain, an understanding of the perspectives and practices of both A2 farmers and their workers will provide an understanding of the extent to which these farmers and workers ‘extract’ value from the chain and the ways in which they both may be marginalised.

1.3 THESIS OBJECTIVES

In this context, the main objective of this thesis is to offer a *critical examination of the lives of farmers and farm labourers in the A2 fast track Lowveld sugar cane farms in Zimbabwe in the context of global value chains*. The secondary objectives include:

- a) To examine the general sugar cane value chain globally and then the Zimbabwean sugar cane industry;
- b) To examine the productivity, profitability and lives of A2 sugar cane farmers since after fast track land reform in relation to economic upgrading;
- c) To examine the successes and challenges the farmers experience as a result of being integrated into sugar value chains;
- d) To examine the lives of permanent and casual farmworkers, including wages and working conditions on A2 sugar cane farms; and
- e) To establish whether these farm workers are experiencing social upgrading or downgrading by being integrated into the global economy.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODS

The fieldwork required deep engagement with farmers and farmworkers on the A2 sugar cane farms to understand if they are experiencing economic and social upgrading as a result of being integrated into GVCs. Because of this, a qualitative research methodology was used, mainly involving semi-structured in-depth interviews. Qualitative research is the most suitable method for this study because it examines lived experiences and practices, and the ways in which people interpret their experiences and practices in a natural setting (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). In doing so, this method creates an interactive process between the interviewer and interviewees which allows the latter to discuss (in an in-depth manner), from their perspective, their lives and the world around them. This method of research allows the interviewer and interviewee to meet in a location about which the interviewees (farmers and farm workers) are comfortable (DiCocco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). Besides interviews, documents available from the Zimbabwean sugar industry, including from Tongaat-Hulett, were used.

The fieldwork took place on six A2 sugar cane farms, which were selected using purposive non-random convenience sampling in terms of available access to sugar cane farms. These interviews took place in October 2018. Initial access to the farms (and to the farmers and workers) was gained through my father, who is an A2 farmer in the Chiredzi area. Because the sample was a non-random one, there is no attempt to generalise the research findings to a broader universe of A2 sugar cane farms in Chiredzi. However, it is likely that the findings do resonate with the situation of farmers and workers on other Chiredzi A2 sugar cane farms.

Overall, 22 individuals were interviewed, and the groups of interviewees were as follows:

- a) Interviews were conducted with 6 farm owners of the A2 sugar cane farms. There were 3 men interviewed and 3 women interviewed. Semi-structured questions (see Appendix B) were formulated which specifically addressed the issues that the farmers were experiencing. The farmers spoke about their own experiences and provided their perspectives on the lives of their workers in the context of pressures experienced by way of the global value chain. The questions sought to understand if sugar cane farming was a lucrative business for the farmers since 2000. It also sought to understand the relationship that existed between the farmers and Hippo Valley Mill and the farmers with their workers. Another focus of the interviews was the many challenges that farmers faced in the early 2000s when they first sought to establish their farms, and whether any changes have occurred since. These interviews were conducted at the farmer's houses which were located at their sugar cane farms.

- b) Interviews were also conducted with 3 farm supervisors of these sugar cane farms. Again, semi-structured interviews were formulated (see Appendix C) that specifically addressed the issues that the supervisors were facing. The questions sought to understand the experiences of the supervisors from when they first became supervisors. One of the aims was to establish whether these supervisors considered it better to work for the previous white farmers or the current black farmers. These interviews also tried to understand the livelihoods of these supervisors, establishing whether or not they have access to basic needs, the various challenges they experienced, and the perceived advantages of being a supervisor. Another focus was their relationships with the farmer and also with the workers under their supervision. These interviews took place in the fields where the supervisors were working.
- c) Interviews were also conducted with 6 permanent workers, working on the A2 sugar cane farms. Semi-structured interviews were formulated (see Appendix D) that specifically addressed issues with regards to permanent workers. These interviews sought to understand the working and living conditions of the workers, both before and subsequent to the implementation of fast track. In this regard, I selected some permanent workers who had also laboured for white farmers before the year 2000. The interviews also explored the advantages of being a permanent worker and the challenges of being a farm worker in general, which meant considering the basic needs of these workers, their wages and their general working conditions. Further, the interviews examined their relationship with the farmer and the supervisor. The interviews with the permanent workers were conducted at the farms where they worked.
- d) The last group of people interviewed were 7 temporary workers. The temporary workers were all male workers. They were 5 cane cutters and the 2 were contractual workers interviewed. This group was split into two: they were either cane cutters and or other kinds of contractual workers. The interviews with these workers (see Appendix E) mainly sought to understand the experiences of being a temporary worker, and how these were different or similar to those of permanent workers. Again, there was an attempt to identify any differences in the experiences of working for white farmers (pre-2000) as opposed to black farmers (post-2000). The challenges faced by these casual workers were also brought to the fore, including around their wages and general livelihoods. These interviews were conducted during harvesting season, so they were done on the farms where these workers were working.

This diverse sample is important in order to capture the sheer diversity in the lives and livelihoods of both farmers and workers in terms of the multiple effects of integration into the sugar cane global value chain, including with reference to social and economic upgrading.

The interviews were conducted mostly in Shona and a few were conducted in English. All the interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed and typed out in English. The data analysis involved qualitative thematic analysis, including coding and categorising the empirical evidence and then identifying themes pertinent to addressing the main and secondary objectives.

In terms of research ethics, all the participants were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix A) after I explained to them the purpose and the content of my research. All the interviews were voluntary, and no one was coerced to address any question asked. Interviewees could withdraw from the interview any time during the course of the interview, without reasons given. Three interviews took place at the sugar cane farms during working hours 6am and 3pm and permission to conduct these interviews was first granted by the farmer and the supervisor.

1.5 THESIS OUTLINE

The second chapter of this thesis is the contextual chapter for the study of the A2 sugar cane farms. The theoretical framing for the study is presented, in particular global value chain and Marxist theories. As well, details about the sugar cane global value chain are provided, along with country case studies, after which I discuss commercial farming, farm labour, sugar cane farming and fast track land reform (all in relation to Zimbabwe). This is a suitable context for going on, in the next chapter (chapter 3), to focus specifically on the A2 sugar cane farms, including detailing the lives and livelihoods of A2 farmers and workers (both permanent and temporary). In doing so, this empirical chapter provides a strong basis for addressing both the main and secondary objectives of the thesis in relation to questions around social and economic upgrading (or downgrading). The last chapter (chapter 4) indicates the way in which the thesis addresses these objectives and how the theoretical framing contributed to addressing these objectives, particular the main one.

CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Sugar cane as a globally integrated industry has been largely successful over many years. Over 120 countries now produce sugar cane and the use of sugar cane has developed over time to produce many things besides sugar, such as fibre for generating electricity, animal feed, molasses and ethanol. It is often assumed that being part of global value chains will lead to one becoming successful (by way of economic and social upgrading). Using literature on the sugar cane industry, this chapter presents the theoretical framework that will inform this thesis and how it relates to the sugar cane industry. It will also look at the sugar cane value chain globally to see how other countries have managed to be successful in the sugar cane industry. To do this, three case studies will be looked at: Brazil (the leading producer of sugar cane globally), Australia and South Africa. These three countries have some of the leading and successful sugar cane industries in the world. Lastly this chapter will look at literature more specific to the case study for this thesis (the Zimbabwean sugar cane industry), including literature on commercial farms, agricultural labour on commercial farms, and fast track land reform.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Globalisation refers to the “increasing integration of economies around the world, particularly through the movement of goods, services, and capital across borders” (IMF, 2008:1). It has been argued that one important way that national economies are integrated is through global value chains which consist of a range of activities that bring a product or a service from its conception to its end use by final consumers. At each step in the chain, value is added in some form or another. As such, many scholars argue that integration of economies into the global economy will lead to positive changes in the value chains (specifically, to economic and social upgrading). For instance, in drawing upon modernisation theory, Gereffi (1994: 98) believed that global chains were an essential vehicle for the development of struggling economies in the global south.

This thesis will use a critical Global Value Chains theoretical framework, which questions the claims about positive changes arising from value chains, along with the Marxist perspective on capital and labour, in understanding the character of global value chains. The aim is to interrogate whether integration into global value chains (GVCs) improves the livelihoods of farmers and farmworkers in the sugar cane farms in Lowveld Zimbabwe through economic and

social upgrading, or whether their lives are not improving (social downgrading) as the critical GVC and Marxist frameworks would tend to argue.

Examining global chains consist of a trilogy of interrelated theoretical frameworks which are Global Commodity Chains (GCC), Global Value Chains (GVC) and Global Production Networks (GPN) (Bair, 2009). This trilogy emerged from a singular framework but later evolved as a result of shifts in the global economy which culminated in the splintering of the field of global chain research (Bair, 2009: 6-7). The first of this trilogy was the GCC which came from the World Systems tradition developed by the Marxist scholar, Wallerstein (Bair, 2009: 6-7). The GCC framework dates back from as far as the 1970s and was given this name by Hopkins and Wallerstein and it was revived again by Gereffi in 1994 (Sturgeon, 2009: 6). It can be defined as “a network of labour and production processes whose end result is a finished commodity” (Bair, 2009: 2). The GCC theory entailed looking at the entire process or chain of a product, that is, “tracing back from the set of inputs, raw materials, transportation mechanisms, labour input of each of the material processes and the food inputs into the labour” (Bair, 2009: 7). The linking of these processes is what they called commodity chains. Bair (2009) argues that, in order to understand the relationship between actors and activities involved in creating goods and services in the global economy, it is necessary to describe them as links in commodity chains (2009: 2).

The GCC framework aimed to understand and interrogate the unequal distribution of rewards that exist amongst different countries (core, periphery and semi-periphery) in the global economy. The core countries are considered as the strong states (in the developed or core nations) that enforce unequal exchange relations that are only favourable to them; in this way, they appropriate surplus and surplus value from the periphery (Harrison, 1988: 86). The periphery countries are exploited by the core, and they are integrated into the global political economy by exporting low wage products to the core nations. Lastly, the semi-periphery is seen as standing between the core and the periphery in relation to economic power. It is exploited by the core, but it also exploits the periphery (Harrison, 1988: 6). The GCC was a framework which clearly sought to explain how and why these unequal global relations were occurring. Furthermore, it focused on how the global division and integration of labour into the world economy had evolved over time (Bair, 2009: 8).

However, the GCC framework was not without criticism and therefore the GVC framework came into existence in the 2000s as a favoured alternative to GCC theory, because it was seen

as being “more inclusive of a full range of possible chain activities and end products” (Bair, 2009: 12). Sturgeon (2009: 10) argues that there was a need to replace the word ‘commodity’ with ‘value’ because of the connotations of the word ‘commodity’ with an undifferentiated product range especially primary products such as oil. The term ‘value’ raised the significance of the “value added” which was fitting for the chain metaphor and also focused on the main source of economic development, notably the application of human effort as often amplified by machines to generate returns on invested capital (Sturgeon, 2009: 10). By calling them global value chains, the global represents how value chains include an element of vast spatial distance which, though, becomes compressed through these chains. Further, regional, national and even local value chains are often situated firmly within the global value chains.

However, the latest variant of global chain research, which is the Global Production Networks (GPN) framework, has criticised its two predecessors for solely focusing on leading firms and the economic upgrading opportunities they supposedly offer developing countries. GPN scholars are concerned about how chains affect or are affected by the local context they are operating in. It also takes into account non-firm actors such as the government, trade unions and non-governmental organisations. In addition, of particular significance to these theorists is the unique spatiality of each production network. In doing so, the GPN framework seems capable of grasping the global, regional and local economic and social dimensions of the processes involved in many forms of economic globalisation (Sewlyn, 2013: 87). However, from this trilogy of global chains, this thesis will be focusing on and mainly using the GVC theoretical framework, as many of the claims made by GPN theorists are not directly related to my case study.

Supporters of globalisation argue that “upgrading through GVCs, or moving to higher value activities, has become important for economic development and job creation in the global economy, where competition remains intense and production has become fragmented and geographically dispersed” (Gereffi and Lee, 2016: 25). Upgrading is often seen as one of the main ways through which developing country firms or industries can respond to the challenges of globalisation and increased competition (Ponte and Ewert, 2009: 2). In this way, “upgrading is linked to a combination of making better products, improving processes to make these products, and/or taking over new functions” (Ponte and Ewert, 2009: 2). Therefore, it is often implicitly assumed that integration into the global economy results in a trickle-down effect where economic upgrading automatically translates into social upgrading through better wages and working conditions (Barrientos et al., 2010: 6). These assumptions though are problematic,

and critical GVC scholars consider the possibilities of upgrading significantly more limited, as do those who more firmly theorise from a Marxist perspective.

It may be the case that some kind of economic upgrading takes place within most global value chains as they become integrated and entrenched into the global economy. Overall, economic upgrading can be defined as “a move to higher value activities in production, to improved technology, knowledge and skills, and to increased benefits or profits deriving from participation in GVCs” (Gereffi, 2005: 61). Economic upgrading is also seen as “a path to a high road of development built on skills and added value, in contrast to that built on exploiting developing countries’ comparative advantage of cheap labour costs” (Rossi, 2013: 223).

Economic upgrading comes in four forms: product, functional, process and chain upgrading (Gereffi and Lee, 2016: 29). These involve improvements within the value chains through better, faster and more efficient technology to help with the process of for example sugar production. Therefore, policy makers in the developing countries have actually pursued economic upgrading opportunities in an attempt to capture a higher share of economic gains from GVC participation (Bamber et al, 2014). As Sewlyn (2013) says, economic upgrading focuses on competitiveness and profitability of a particular industry. The question though is who along the global value chain (from farm to fork, so to speak) experiences economic upgrading and who does not. Therefore, for this study, one key focus of this research will be to see whether the A2 farmers in the sugar cane industry are experiencing economic upgrading.

Social upgrading focuses more on the betterment of workers’ conditions and remuneration (Selwyn, 2013: 79). The concept of social upgrading was derived from the Decent Work Agenda of the International Labour Organisation (ILO DWA). The ILO’s conception of Decent Work is one that comprises of four aspects: employment, social protection, workers’ rights and social dialogue (Selwyn, 2013: 79). Furthermore, it promoted work that was performed under conditions of: freedom, equity, security, human dignity in which rights are protected and adequate remuneration and social coverage protected (Selwyn, 2013: 80). The Decent Work Agenda defines social upgrading as follows: “A process of improvements in the rights and entitlements of workers as social actors, which enhances their quality of employment. This includes access to better work which might result from economic upgrading, but it also involves enhancing working conditions, protections and rights” (Selwyn, 2013: 80). Therefore, the focus of social upgrading in GVC analysis is on workers as it seeks to identify how workers’ conditions in chains and networks are affected by global chains (Selwyn, 2013: 79). In this

context, it is contestable whether global value chains are necessarily inconsistent with the existence of low wage sectors in developing nations. Nevertheless, another focus of this research is to look at whether the workers on A2 sugar cane farms are experiencing social upgrading. In fact, more attention will be paid to social upgrading in comparison to economic upgrading in the case study of the sugar cane industry in Zimbabwe.

In this regard, there are two broad elements to social upgrading as suggested by Rossi (2013). These elements are measurable standards and enabling rights and, for my purposes, the focus will be on measurable standards. Measurable standards are seen as aspects of a worker's well-being that are easily observable and quantifiable, such as wages, physical well-being, living conditions and employment security (Barrientos et.al, 2011: 324). Enabling rights are more difficult to measure as they include elements such as freedom of association and collective bargaining. They also speak to rights and entitlements of workers as social actors, power relations between workers and management and industrial relations (Rossi, 2013: 224). Therefore, using measurable standards such as wages, living conditions and other observable features, this thesis will seek to see whether the sugarcane farm workers are experiencing social upgrading.

Advocates of social upgrading do not believe that economic upgrading (even if it does take place) automatically leads to social upgrading (Selwyn, 2013: 79). Instead, they problematise how to achieve mutually beneficial processes and outcomes with regard to economic and social upgrading, in which both firms and workers are winners in and through GVCs (Sewlyn, 2009: 79). These concerns are informed by a growing number of cases studies that increasingly illustrate the manner in which profitable GVCs are characterised by domineering lead firms or retailers whose demands create precarious conditions for workers employed in GVCs. In other words, the possibility that social downgrading takes place should not be ignored, as there no inevitable trickle-down effects, from economic upgrading to social upgrading, exist. It thus cannot be assumed or asserted that social upgrading occurs.

A case study done by Sewlyn (2016), therefore shows the exploitation of workers in the iPhone factories in China. For instance, the Apple Corporation was involved in economic upgrading at the expense of low paid Chinese workers. These workers laboured very long hours and they are expected to achieve 95% compliance with regard to a 60-hour work week which is in contrast to the ILO's maximum of 48 working hours per week. Overall, Selwyn (2016) argues that establishment of super-exploited labour forces across the global south is in fact the bedrock

upon which the global manufacturing system exists. In this light, it is clear that social downgrading entails a process where there are no significant improvements in the rights and entitlements of workers (Selwyn, 2013). It includes casualisation of labour, cutting of wages, poor living conditions, increased poverty and insecure employment (Selwyn, 2016). In other words, the lives of the workers stagnant or even become worse with falling real wages.

In this context, the Marxist perspective is important in explaining social downgrading, given that capitalism as a profit-driven economic system is based on the maximisation of surplus value and the exploitation of the workforce. At a national level, for any firm to survive in a capitalist market, which is vastly competitive, it needs to maintain profitability. Failure to do so means that the firm will be forced out of business. The same situation exists with regard to global value chains. Each of the nodal points in the chain (including farmers, exporters and retailers) are seeking to maximise their share of the value generated in and through the chain. Farm labourers, as one labouring force within global value chains, are producers of surplus value (from a Marxist perspective) as they use their labour power to generate labour (and thus value) for the owners of the means of production. The value they receive in turn (through wages) is far less than the surplus value they generate, which is source of profits. The working class, which is dominated by the owners of the means of production, are particularly vulnerable. This allows the owners of the means of production to enhance their surplus value through various forms of extraction, such as intensifying work through technological innovations or lengthening the working day. Either, there are constant attempts to minimise labour costs and thereby maximise profits. This might lead, as it is argued it does in GVCs, to workers (such as farm labourers) receiving wages which inhibits the reproduction of their labour power (Sewlyn, 2016: 9; Xue and Chan, 2013: 58). Farmers, who themselves may not experience significant economic upgrading (insofar as they are subordinate to the demands of corporate retailers in the global north) may tighten the squeeze on their farm labourers as wages are often the easiest input cost to reduce.

Hence, assumptions and assertions about economic and social upgrading are problematic because, as Xue and Chan (2013: 58) argue, they pay insufficient attention to “[uneven] wealth distribution within chains and fail to focus on working conditions and labour relationships”. In GVCs, there are both winners and losers because of differential value extraction (Rossi, 2013; Sewlyn, 2009). In general, the available empirical evidence shows that workers experience variegated outcomes in global chains (Nadvi and Barrientos, 2004; Puppim de Oliveira 2008) and often social downgrading. Farmers, as indicated, may also be subject to economic pressures

with large retail multinational corporations often maximising value from the chain at the expense of those involved directly in the production process (Selywn, 2016).

2.3 SUGAR VALUE CHAIN AND INDUSTRY GLOBALLY

The sugar value chain refers to the production of the raw product until the final or finished product. As such, this section examines the sugar value chain from a global point and then it will be narrowed down the focus to the specific case study which is in the Lowveld of Zimbabwe.

Sugarcane is cultivated as a perennial crop which grows for one year and is known as a ‘plant cane’ (Legendre and Burner, 1995: 55). The planted cane is cut and processed to produce sugar, while the plant cane root and small amount of stem is left in the ground and then grows over the next year to produce the first ratoon. It is then harvested to produce sugar again and the residue of the plant is left and grows for a further year into a second ratoon. In some countries, this cycle is repeated until the fifth ratoon before the plant is finally uprooted and a new crop is planted (Encyclopaedia of Life Support). Sugar is suited for tropical regions which are warm and sunny. It responds to long periods of sunlight of about 12 to 14 hours and it needs to be well fertilised for it to grow well (DAFF, 2014:6). Sugarcane can be harvested after 12 to 16 months when it is 2 to 4 metres tall (DAFF, 2014: 21). It is ideal to harvest between April and December when rainfall is less frequent.

Sugar value chains around the world are generally “push chains”. This means that sugar cane is pushed through the chain to produce raw sugar with minimal product differentiation and sold at a market value as a bulk commodity (Higgins et al., 2007: 612). The general sugar value chain usually involves growing, harvesting, cane transporting, the milling processing, storage and shipping (Higgins et.al, 2007: 612). Sugar research, particularly from within the sugar industry, has expanded rapidly over the past couple of decades and it has been motivated by the low sugar prices and rising cost of production. The long-term sugar price trend has been downwards, at least in recent years, with a 50% decrease over the 35-year period to 1999 despite the costs of production generally increasing (Higgins et.al, 2007). Industries involved in sugar markets are seeking ways of enhancing profitability especially with the pressures put on sugar prices by increasing competition from new intense sweeteners as alternatives to sugar (Higgins et al., 2007: 612).

Besides just being used for sugar production, sugarcane in the last 10-15 years has gained great attention for its potential to help alleviate the world demand for sustainable energy production

(Arruda, 2011: 3). Growing sugarcane for sugar changed when the energy crises imposed by World War 1 and 2 and OPEC oil crises stimulated the need for mills to start producing ethanol as a way of alleviating excess sugar production and simultaneously producing an alternative vehicle fuel (Arruda, 2011: 4).

Internationally sugarcane is the world's largest crop by production quantity and sugar is produced in 120 countries (DAFF, 2014: 3). Global production now exceeds 165 million tons a year and about 80% of sugar is produced from sugarcane and 20% is produced from sugar beets (DAFF, 2014: 3). The ten largest sugar producing nations represent roughly 75% of the world sugar production. Brazil is the largest producing country in the world and accounts for almost 25% of the world production (DAFF, 2014: 4). In 2012/13, Brazil produced 588 million tons of sugar and the world production of sugar is close to 1.6 billion tons annually (DAFF, 2014: 4). It is argued that outside of Brazil, Southern Africa is now the hottest spot in the sugar industry (Gukurume and Mushuku, 2017: 6). Therefore, this section will look at three countries (Brazil, Australia and South Africa) as a way of trying to understand the sugarcane value chains and how they operate globally.

2.3.1 Brazilian Sugarcane Value Chain

As noted, Brazil is the leading producer of sugarcane in the world, producing about 25% of all the sugarcane in the world (DAFF, 2014: 4). Sugarcane has been grown in Brazil since 1532. The rise in sugar demand and high prices in the 16th century led to the first commercial production of sugar in Brazil (De Souza Silvia et al., 2016: 165). The financial support they received from the Dutch East India Company at that time allowed the sugar industry to rapidly expand (De Souza Silvia et al., 2016: 165). More recently, the sugar industry in Brazil has been experiencing a rapid shift towards creating grounds for a green and sustainable bio-refinery industry (Arruda, 2011: 3).

The Brazilian sugarcane industry experience is one of the examples of a countrywide industrial success by joining efforts of agriculture, bio-sciences and engineering and the auto industry to develop a modern agricultural industry (Arruda, 2011: 3). In other words, sugarcane farming in Brazil goes beyond just producing sugar for exportation, as Brazil is also developing other uses from the sugarcane bagasse to produce products such as ethanol and electricity (Arruda, 2011: 4-5). Bagasse is the fibrous waste material remaining after the juice has been extracted from the sugar cane. Over the years, ethanol has been a major focus worldwide as a sustainable liquid for fuel (Arruda, 2011: 4). Furthermore, in Brazil, the modern mills are not only self-sufficient in energy, but they produce an excess of electricity that is sold, and this is called bio-

electricity (Arruda, 2011:5). This bio-electricity is increasing at rapid rates and currently contributing to 4% of the total electricity consumed in Brazil (Arruda, 2011: 6).

Brazil has three types of mills and one type produces sugar, another ethanol and the last type produces both sugar and ethanol (De Souza Silvia et al., 2016: 168). However, in as much as ethanol is produced in Brazil, Brazil exports more sugar than ethanol. Sugarcane is a very suitable crop for the production of renewable energy, and it has placed Brazil as the epicentre of the renewable energy world (Arruda, 2011: 6). The sugar and ethanol industries in Brazil have seen major investments by foreign companies since 2008/9 when the global economy crises hit the Brazilian mills (De Souza Silvia et.al, 2016: 173). It is estimated that, by 2021, the Brazilian sugarcane industry will double with the sugarcane production reaching 1,038 million tons per year (Arruda, 2011: 6). There are 438 sugarcane mills in operation with new large-scale sugarcane mills being projected for construction over the next five years (Arruda, 2011: 6). Furthermore, the Brazilian sugarcane is currently seen as the basis for an extensive alcohol chemistry industry (Arruda, 2011: 7). Engineers and scientists from a Brazilian petro-chemical company called Braskem have developed an innovative technology that produces bioplastic from sugarcane ethanol (Arruda, 2011: 7). This has led to other chemical companies investing in sugarcane derived bioplastic plants in Brazil.

Furthermore, cellulosic ethanol has also attracted industry attention. With a hundred million tons of sugarcane bagasse produced annually in Brazilian sugarcane mills, it is viewed as the best carbon source for the production of cellulosic ethanol (Arruda, 2011: 7). The advantage is that this bagasse is already at the mill with no extra cost. The potential of sugarcane bagasse being used as cellulosic ethanol has received increasing attention from large oil companies (Arruda, 2011: 7). This in turn keeps boosting, benefiting and expanding the Brazilian sugarcane industries as it is opening itself up to produce various products. In addition to the production of sugar and ethanol, technologies are in place to produce plastics, advanced fuels and high value molecules for the lubricants and the cosmetic industries (Arruda, 2011: 8). In other words, the sugarcane value chain in Brazil is one that has grown over the years to create more opportunities from sugarcane than most countries that are producing sugarcane in the world. Furthermore, as Arruda (2011) shows, there are more opportunities for this industry to grow as it has even started attracting foreign investment and other large companies.

2.3.2 Sugar Value Chain in Australia

In Australia, most of the sugarcane is grown in the north-east due to favourable conditions and the seasons extend from early winter to late spring (Higgins and Laredo, 2006: 367). About 95% of their sugarcane is produced in Queensland and the rest is produced in New South Wales (ASMC, 2018). The industry's major product is raw sugar sold domestically and abroad (ASMC, 2018). There are 30 mill regions in Australia and raw sugar has a total annual export value of AU\$1400,000,000 making it the country's second largest export crop (Higgins and Laredo, 2006: 367). A typical mill region has about 200-300 privately owned and operated farms covering 15,000 hectares of land under cane (Higgins and Laredo, 2006: 367). When sugarcane is harvested from the farm, infield haul-out vehicles transport the cane to the nearby loading pad where trailers will be waiting to be filled (Higgins, 2004). In Australia, most of the transporting of sugarcane is done by road or by railway from the farm to the mill (Higgins, 2004: 987). After being harvested, sugarcane deteriorates; as such, most of the mills in Australia aim to have the cut-to-crush delay less than 18 hours but it usually averages 9 hours (Higgins, 2004: 988).

Australia generates electricity and steam for the factory from the bagasse produced by the sugarcane (ASMC, 2018). The use of bagasse to produce "green" biomass energy reduces the country's greenhouse gas emissions by over 1.5 million tons every year (ASMC, 2018). Decreases in the international sugar price has led the sugar industries around the world to explore opportunities to decrease costs of production (Higgins, 2004: 987). For Australia, one of the ways to do this was to create opportunities for a more efficient sugar cane transport system that would better integrate with their harvesting activities (Higgins, 2004: 987). This is because transporting sugarcane in Australia is about 15% of the total production costs (Higgins, 2004: 987). Addressing harvesting and transporting sector in the sugar value chain has thus been regarded as the highest priority in the evaluation of the Australian sugar industry (Higgins, 2004: 987). Therefore, the sugar value chain in Australia has mostly focused on improving the transporting and harvesting of the sugarcane for the industry to be profitable.

2.3.3 South African Sugarcane Value Chain

South Africa is one of the world's leading sugar producers, producing high quality sugar cane of about 2.5 million tons a year (Mashoko et al., 2010: 794). The sugar industry makes a significant contribution to the South African national economy, generating direct income of approximately 6 billion South African Rands per year (Mashoko et al., 2010: 794). The South African industry is consistently ranking in the top 15 of the 120 countries that produce sugar

worldwide (DAFF, 2014: 2). Its excellent export infrastructure, world renowned agricultural and industrial research platforms and efficient organisation are key drivers of its excellence (SASA, 2008).

Sugar is grown in KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape and the sugarcane growers are represented by the South African Sugar Growers Association (DAFF, 2014: 2). The large-scale growers in South Africa are approximately 1,400 in number and they produce approximately 83% of the total sugar, while the milling companies with their own sugar estates produce about 7% of the sugarcane (DAFF, 2014: 2).

The South African sugar industry makes an important contribution to the national economy, contributing to agricultural and industrial investments and foreign exchange earnings (National Development Agency, 2006: 1). It is a diverse industry which combines the activities of cultivating sugarcane with industrial factory production of raw materials and refined sugars, syrups and specialised sugar and a range of other by-products (National Development Agency, 2006: 1). Focusing on the empowering of previously disadvantaged groups, a growing number of black people are now entering sugarcane farming in commercial farms made available at market related prices (National Development Agency, 2006: 1). These cane growers are supported by the Sugar Cane Growers Association, which seeks to ensure that all local grower structures and individual growers are supported in economic, industrial, technical and institutional matters (SASA, 2008). It also provides opportunities for growers to improve and enhance their technical, financial and leadership skills (SASA, 2008).

The sugar cane that is produced from the farming areas is supplied to 14 mills in South Africa. Illovo Sugar Ltd and Tongaat Hulett Sugar Ltd both own four mills each while others are owned by Tsb Sugar RSA Ltd, Gledhow Sugar Company Ltd, UCL Company Ltd and Umfolozi Sugar Mill (SASA, 2008). The industry uses bagasse to provide process heat for the boilers (Mashoko et.al, 2010: 794). The mills also co-generate electricity from the bagasse mainly for their own consumption and then small amounts are exported to small communities that are around the mill (Mashoko et.al, 2010: 794). The South African sugar industry exports more than 50% of its sugar production and is generally amongst the top ten sugar exporters in the world (DAFF, 2011: 10). Raw sugar cane exports are predominantly to the Far East and Middle East refineries. The industry competes directly with Brazil, Thailand, Australia and Guatemala for raw sugar markets and with refineries in the European subsidised sugar exports (DAFF, 2011: 10)

2.4 COMMERCIAL FARMS, FAST TRACK AND A2 FARMERS IN ZIMBABWE

In 1980, Zimbabwe's agrarian structure consisted of 33 million hectares of agricultural land, with 11 million hectares belonging to about 6,000 large scale commercial farmers (Moyo et.al, 2007: 182). The vast majority of this land was highly productive land used for farming crops such as maize, cotton, tobacco and wheat (Weiner et.al, 1985: 255). Agricultural land for Africans was restricted to mainly drier regions in what became known as Native Reserves, then Tribal Trust Lands, and then communal areas from 1981. When Zimbabwe gained independence, the journey to land redistribution began. Redistributive land reforms in Zimbabwe were seen as a basis for relieving landlessness as well as overcrowding in the communal areas (Moyo, 2011: 497). Land redistribution happened in three phases in Zimbabwe.

The first phase lasted until 1990 and this consisted of market sales of land to the state for purposes of resettlement (Moyo, 2011: 495). This land redistribution process, which involved market-led reform, was decided upon at the Lancaster House agreement (Weiner et.al, 1985: 258). What this entailed was that land had to be sold by way of a willing-seller to willing-buyer process. Even the state was unable to access land for redistribution except through purchasing it from a willing buyer and at market prices (Weiner et.al, 1985: 258). The second phase occurred during the era of Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAP) in the 1990s, based on neo-liberal restructuring, so this also involved market-led land redistribution (Moyo and Yeros, 2007). During the 1980s and 1990s very little land redistribution took place.

There was an increasing radicalisation of the Zimbabwean state in the late 1990s such that, in 1997, 1,471 farms were listed for redistribution to mainly communal farmers (Moyo and Yeros, 2007: 104). The extent and direction of this radicalisation were unpredictable at the time. Some of these farms were delisted and, at a Donors conference in September 1988, the government agreed to launch an inception land redistribution phase concentrating on 118 farms voluntarily offered for sale (Moyo et.al, 2007: 183). The slow implementation of the new Inception Phase, and growing frustration amongst the landless, led to illegal land occupations occurring on prime commercial lands in 1997 and 1998 (Moyo et.al, 2007: 183).

Soon afterwards, the third phase in the form of Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) from the year 2000 began. This programme of the state was a direct policy response to the countrywide occupations of white commercial farms and other landholdings which began in February 2000 (Moyo, 2011: 495). War veterans (ex-guerrillas) mobilised mainly communal areas people to occupy the land. At times, they sought the total restitution of all land and

displacement of all white ('settler') farmers, while at other times there was negotiation and attempts to come to some kind of accommodation. In the end, under fast track, total alienation of white commercial lands was the predominant tendency.

Between 1980 and 2009, most white commercial farms had been redistributed and resettled, but the vast majority of this was done under fast track (Moyo, 2011: 497). The fast track land reform benefitted 168,671 families comprising mainly people from communal areas but also working people from urban spaces (Moyo, 2011: 497). In addition, a significant number of ruling party elites or those with ruling party connections were able to access fast track lands. This can be understood in terms of the two models contained in the fast track programme. On the one hand, commercial farms were heavily subdivided to allow for small-scale agriculture under the A1 model; on the other hand, some commercial farms were taken over as complete units or divided into large tracts of land under the A2 model (with the latter model leading to a degree of elite capture of the programme). The A2 model is of direct relevance to this case study of the sugar cane farms.

2.5 SUGAR CANE INDUSTRY IN ZIMBABWE

The Zimbabwean sugar industry is regarded as one of the most efficient in the region and even in the world (Scoones et.al, 2017: 570). Seeing how highly competitive this industry is worldwide, the low cost and high-output operations in the Lowveld are highly valued. These sugar cane plantations in Zimbabwe are located in the remote areas of the country which is the Lowveld (Scoones et.al, 2017: 568). The Lowveld region of Zimbabwe is ideal for the production of sugar cane given its climate endowments (Gukurume and Mushuku, 2012). The areas where it is largely grown are Triangle and Chiredzi and about 80% of the Zimbabwe's sugar cane is produced at these two large estates (Sikuka, 2017: 3). Private farmers including large scale A2 farmers and other newly resettled farmers produce about 20% of the country's sugar cane crop (Sikuka, 2017: 3). A South African company called Tongaat-Hulett owns 100% of the Triangle estate and about 50.3% of the Hippo Valley Estate. There are also other sugar cane farms in the Lowveld such as Mkwesine and Chisumbanje (Scoones et.al, 2017: 581). Chisumbanje largely grows sugar cane to produce ethanol and has the backing and support of the government, as this project has been regarded as a strategic response to perennial fuel shortages in Zimbabwe (Scoones et.al, 2017: 581).

Hippo Valley is the second largest producer of sugar cane in Zimbabwe with Triangle producing most of the sugar (Gukurume and Mushuku, 2012). Triangle Limited started growing sugar in 1934 and was formerly owned by Anglo American but it is now fully owned

by Tongaat-Hulett Sugar Limited, which also owns sugar cane mills outside of Zimbabwe (Gukurume and Mushuku, 2012: 6). Triangle is a major earner of foreign exchange for Zimbabwe through export of sugar and alcohol products. The main export destinations for Zimbabwe sugar are the United States, European Union and southern Africa (mainly Botswana) (Sikuka, 2017).

Before independence of Zimbabwe in 1980, the Hippo Valley sugar cane farms were privately owned by white farmers (Scoones et.al, 2017: 571). In 2000, as land invasions occurred around Zimbabwe, there were many calls for the sugar estates to be taken over (Scoones et.al, 2017: 567), as was happening with other commercial farms at the time (Sachikonye, 2003: 24). The result of this was subdivision of farmer settler out-grower areas in Hippo Valley and Mkwazine estates as they transferred land to about 800 land reform beneficiaries who had applied through the A2 scheme designed for medium scale enterprises and for those with the prerequisite skills and resources (Scoones et.al, 2017: 568). However, company officials, government agricultural extension officers and others were sceptical that the new farmers would be able to supply sugar in sufficient amounts and at the quality required for the two mills at Triangle and Hippo Valley. They argued that the new settlers could not possibly achieve the results of previous white European and Mauritian out growers (Scoones et.al, 2017: 569). However, the land reform in sugar out-grower areas was not a “land to the people” redistributive move to combat landlessness and poverty. The A2 beneficiaries are certainly not universally powerful and well connected but the sugar allowances were definitely not addressing the poor disadvantaged masses (Scoones et.al, 2017: 583).

Despite the massive declines in sugar output during Zimbabwe’s economic crisis in the 2000s, which resulted in drops in yield, lack of fertilisation and a failure to replant, the situation has massively improved since 2009 (Scoones et.al, 2017: 573). Despite the uncertainties and sometimes difficult conditions, including constraints on water supply and competition on the domestic market due to imports, the company (Tongaat Hullet) posted an increase in operating profit in 2014 of 11 per cent over all its activities in the sub-region. Of its sugar businesses, 36 per cent of the profit was from the Zimbabwe operations in 2014, down from 44 per cent in 2013. With specific reference to A2 sugar farming enterprises, some have failed while others have thrived; and there are many that are somewhere in-between success and failure; however, largely the sceptics have been proven wrong as production has generally been thriving (Scoones, et.al, 2017, 573).

Out growers are now crucial to the success of the sugar cane industry. These out growers are not classic ‘peasant’ farmers on small plots (as is the case in A1 land reform areas), but are generally well-resourced, wealthier and have a certain level of agricultural knowledge, as well as being connected to political authorities (Scoones et al, 2017: 568). From the research done by Scoones et al. (2017), it appears that the average age of the new out growers was 58 years and at least 53 percent of them had farming qualifications (Master Farmer Certificates). Land reform beneficiaries, out growers (‘private farmers’), are key to the company’s operation, both economically and politically, and so the fortunes of these A2 land reform beneficiaries have become intimately bound up with the company’s operations. However, sugar cane farming is not necessarily the livelihood activities of these out-grower famers, especially during the economic crisis of the 2000s as they diversified in order to survive (Scoones et.al, 2017: 576).

Overall, the sugar industry is extremely important for economic growth in Zimbabwe (Gukurume and Mushuku, 2017). Sugar cane is important because the number of by-products from sugar cane far outweigh those from other commercial crops (Gukurume and Mushuku, 2017: 7). Productivity in the sugar industry also affects the national economy in terms of foreign currency earnings, production of ethanol, generation of electricity, molasses and other by products of sugar cane (Chidoko and Chimwai, 2011).

2.6 LIVELIHOOD OF WORKERS IN ZIMBABWE FARMS INCLUDING SUGAR CANE FARMS

Literature on the working and living conditions of workers in the global value chain (and specifically at the production end of the chain) highlights that these workers fall squarely within the low wage sector, with all the implications this has for their livelihoods (Smith, 2016: 187). Before considering the situation of workers on white commercial farms in Zimbabwe, and in particular on sugar cane farms), I note one important study from the global value chain literature.

A case study done by Rossi (2013) on the Moroccan garment and apparel industry (which exports to the European Union) reflects on the different working conditions of what she calls regular (permanent) workers and irregular (temporary) workers, with most workers being women. In her study, Rossi (2013) discovered that wages and employment conditions are consistently found to be better among permanent workers. Rossi (2013: 144) notes that workers who were not permanent play a ‘buffering’ role for the factory to remain cost competitive and flexible in terms of last-minute changes in orders. The regular workers in the factory are the higher skilled workers with stable wages, bonuses and medical cover. This is in contrast to the irregular workers who are younger and receive the minimum wage or no pay at all, and without

any job security. I refer to this particular study because of the distinction between permanent and casual labour, which is relevant to my case study of the sugar cane farms. In other words, when considering the issue of social upgrading and downgrading, differentiation within the workforce becomes important, as other scholars on global value chains have noted (Karlsen, 2009).

Historically, white commercial agriculture has been one of the largest employers in Zimbabwe. Depending on the crops grown or livestock held, white farmers may or may not have been involved in export markets – in cases such as tobacco, beef cattle and sugar, they became integrated into global markets in what we now call global value chains. Most of these farm workers are from Zimbabwe and neighbouring countries such as Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia (Scoones et.al, 2018: 10-11). Farm labourers tended to live in compounds on the farm, that is, on the property of the white commercial farmers which was held under freehold title (Rutherford, 2001; Sachikonye, 2002). They were highly dependent on the farm owner for income, shelter, food, and access to schools and clinics (Sachikonye, 2002), as the colonial government tended to take a hands-off approach when it came to interfering in the farm-based affairs of white farmers. Wages were extremely low, but there was a distinction between permanent workers and casual workers. Typically, permanent were male workers and casual labourers (who often worked according to piece-rates) were drawn from the wives and even the children of the male workers. In addition, where a white farm existed close to a Native Reserve/Tribal Trust Land, casual and seasonal labour was drawn from these areas.

With independence in 1980, the new Zimbabwean government did pass labour legislation to enhance and protect the position of workers on white farms but, in general, white farms continued to exist as almost private fiefdoms, with farm labourers continuing to fall within the low-wage sector of the economy. In the case of the new A2 commercial farms, the evidence suggests that no significant change has taken place in uplifting the position of farm labourers, with the labour force continuing live on the farms and being stratified along the permanent-temporary/casual/seasonal divide (Scoones et al., 2017), and often on a gender basis. In fact, tens of thousands of farm labourers were displaced from white commercial farms because of fast track reform, while others have retained the right to remain on an A2 (or A1) farm without any guarantee of employment on either a permanent or casual basis (Sachikonye, 2002).

Hence, while the agricultural sector in Zimbabwe has been one of the largest employers, it has also been associated with very low wages and some of the most unsuitable working and living

conditions (Gukurume and Mushuku, 2012: 2). The case of sugar cane workers in Zimbabwe does not appear to be considerably different, in terms of what the limited available literature indicates. This is despite the fact that, certainly in the case of A2 farmers, the expertise of workers has been essential in the re-establishment of sugar production. These workers are facing a plethora of challenges even though they are employed in a very profitable industry (Gukurume and Mushuku, 2012).

Regrettably, as Gukurume and Mushuku (2012: 10) note, there has been only scant research undertaken on the livelihoods and experiences of workers on sugar cane farms in Zimbabwe. Nevertheless, it is clear that workers employed by the large sugar cane producers tend to experience deficient conditions of work and living (Singh, 2003). A range of specialist skills, often seasonally required and differentiated by gender, is required on sugar cane farms (Scoones et.al, 2017: 578). These farms comprise of both permanent and temporary farm workers, which are essential to their functioning. The temporary labour is in demand for many tasks such as weeding, fertilising and cutting the sugar cane (Chidoko and Chimwai, 2011). The wage rates are said to be fairly standard and comparable to other agricultural employment (Scoones et.al, 2017: 578). In 2013, the average wage for permanent workers was US\$116 per month and for casual workers it was US\$7 for men and US\$4.40 for women a day (Scoones et.al, 2017: 578). Furthermore, casual workers are given fewer employment rights and benefits as compared to permanent workers.

Casual workers are clearly disadvantaged. For example, at Triangle, especially the cane cutters face significant challenges although they are employed by a large and reputable company (Gukurume and Mushuku, 2012: 10). In other words, they are part of the thriving sugar cane value chain, yet their livelihoods are problematic. The research done by Gukurume and Mushuku (2012) shows that sugar cane cutters pursued this work as a survivalist strategy. This means that the livelihood and poverty vulnerability of these workers compelled them to become cane cutters (Gukurume and Mushuku, 2012). These cane cutters have limited alternative sources of income and this may to some extent be explained by their low levels of education (Gukurume and Mushuku, 2012: 12). Furthermore, the seasonal nature of the sugar cane crop creates significant uncertainty for the casual workers because they do not have any job security. This means they can be abruptly stopped from working and only be called back when it is time for harvest. Furthermore, cane cutting especially is an extremely hazardous job yet most of the workers undertake their activities without protective clothing, which raises serious health and safety concerns. If they complaint about matters such as this, even about their wages, they can

be easily dismissed and replaced by other people eager to work on these farms. Therefore, because they are easily replaceable, most of them would rather be exploited than dismissed as this is their only source of livelihood (Gukurume and Mushuku, 2012). Some of these workers, when they are not working on these farms, have side jobs including selling fruit such as mangoes as well as tomatoes and vegetables at the closest market (Gukurume and Mushuku, 2012: 19). Finally, the houses of most of the cane cutters have been given derogatory nicknames because of their inhuman nature (Gukurume and Mushuku, 2012: 3). The houses they live in are extremely small and most of them lack electricity and clean piped water.

2.7 CONCLUSION

From this chapter, it can be established that the sugar cane industry involves a global market that has been in existence and booming for years. This industry has been integrated into the global economy and trades and operates at a global level. This can also be seen through the country focus of this thesis (Zimbabwe), where sugar cane has been doing well economically. Furthermore, in Zimbabwe after the 2000s, some sugar cane farms were taken over by black A2 farmers through the FTLRP, who employ both permanent and temporary workers. In seeking to understand questions around economic and social upgrading for A2 farmers and their workers, I have outlined my preferred theoretical framework based on a critical analysis of global value chains. By adopting this approach, this does not imply that I have come to any foregone conclusions about upgrading in my case study. Rather, the critical framing opens up for a line of enquiry which does not take upgrading as a given. Hence, though the global value chain may be thriving, it is important to consider the extent to which farmers and farm labourers at the production end of the value chain are able to 'extract' a share of the value for their benefit. This is now considered in chapter 2, where I describe and analyse my case study of A2 sugar cane farms in Zimbabwe.

CHAPTER 3: CASE STUDY OF A2 SUGAR FARMS IN THE LOWVELD, ZIMBABWE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The Zimbabwean sugar industry is regarded as one of the most efficient in the world, and given the intense competition globally, the low-cost, high-output sugar cane operations in the Zimbabwean Lowveld are highly valued. It is often implied that, if industries such as this are integrated in the global economy through value chains, it will lead to economic upgrading which in turn translates into social upgrading. Other scholars, as noted earlier argue against this notion as say they that even if economic upgrading does take place it does not automatically lead to social upgrading; in fact, it could lead to the opposite, which is social downgrading. In other words, for this particular study, interrogating these views means looking at whether or not the livelihoods of the farmers and farm workers improve through their incorporation into the sugar value chain

In this chapter, I focus on the lives and livelihoods of A2 farmers and their workforce on sugar cane farms in the Lowveld of Zimbabwe. Therefore, in drawing upon my case study of sugar cane A2 farmers and their farmworkers from Tongaat Hullett, Hippo Valley Mill in Chiredzi in the Lowveld, this chapter addresses the question of economic and social upgrading and, in doing so, considers the experiences and challenges of A2 farmers and farm labourers in the context of the sugar cane global value chain. This entails a focus on the productivity, profitability and lives of the A2 farmers and as well as on the working and living conditions of the farm workforce, including in relation to the pre-2000 period (i.e. before fast track) when many of the workers laboured in the sugar cane industry under white commercial farmers.

3.2 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF A2 FARMS AT TONGAAT HULLETT, HIPPO VALLEY MILL

Tongaat Hulett is an agricultural and agri-business, which focuses on both sugar cane and maize production and milling. It has mills in South Africa, Mozambique, Kingdom of eSwatini, Botswana and Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe, Tongaat-Hulett has two estates which it owns. Of those two estates, it owns 100% of the Triangle Estate and about 50.3% of the Hippo Valley Estate. Over time, it has created employment opportunities for around 18,000 permanent workers, plus several thousand casual workers, across the two mills and estates; and the 870 out-growers employ a further 7,000 people. The Hippo Valley mill was established in 1956 as a citrus estate and then diversified with the first cane plant in 1959. It is the second largest producer of sugar cane in Zimbabwe with Triangle producing most of the sugar. Both the

Triangle and Hippo Valley Estates have a combined annual milling capacity of about 4.8 million tons of sugar cane. The Hippo Valley sugar cane plantations are located in the south eastern part of the country which is in the Lowveld. The main focus of this research is on the Hippo Valley estate because of the A2 farmers which supply it with sugar cane and the farm workers that work on these A2 farms.



Researcher at A2 sugar cane farm

3.2.1 Hippo Valley A2 Sugar Cane Farms

The Hippo Valley A2 farms are located in Hippo Valley, in the Lowveld of Zimbabwe. This area receives less than 450mm per annum of rainfall through erratic showers and is thus subject to periodic drought. Therefore, sugarcane on these farms is grown under flood irrigation and

some farms use centre pivot irrigation. This part of the country has the ideal climate for farming sugar cane as it has extended periods of sun which is needed for this sub-tropical crop. The A2 farms range from about 15 hectares to 100 hectares. Before the year 2000, these farms were owned by white farmers. However, during the fast track land reform programme in the 2000s, land changed hands and black farmers took over these farms. The Ministry of Lands and Rural Resettlement was responsible for issue offer letters to these A2 farmers based on the applications they had initially submitted to the Ministry. Presently, A2 commercial farmers and other newly resettled farmers produce about 20% of the country's sugar cane crop.



Cane on the way to the Hippo Valley Mill

The agricultural sugar cane season runs for 12 months. On the A2 sugar cane farms studied, some farmers indicated that the 12-month season starts in January and others said it starts in April. For the purposes of setting out the agricultural season on these farms, I will use April as the start of the season. Though the crops are harvested and cropped at different times, depending on the start of the season, the stages in the agricultural season on the farms is as follows:

April: This is when the sugar cane mills start crushing sugar cane. This is when mills of Triangle and the Hippo Valley Mills start crushing sugar cane and it also when harvesting begins.

May: During this time, harvesting continues and then there is trashing. Trashing is when the workers clear the field so that they can start preparing it for the next crop. The area that has been cleared is now irrigated and weeding starts as well. Fertilising and spraying chemicals is also done at this stage. The fertilisers that are put at this stage are called phosphates and weed killers.

June to November: The same process as in May continues. However, in June and July, the fertilisers that are used for the crops are now different from the ones used in the beginning.

December: This is the time when the mill closes, and harvesting will have ended.

January to March: As noted, at this time, harvesting would have ended. The crop just needs to be weeded, fertilised, irrigated and have chemicals sprayed so that it grows well. In April, the cycle begins again and the cane that was cropped in April of the previous year is now ready to be harvested.

How the sugar cane season cane season works is that as soon as the farmer finishes harvesting an area, he then clears that area up and ratooning starts for the next crop. Ratooning is the process of using the roots of the cane to grow new cane. The ground is watered and fertilised and then the new crop shoots up and ratooning can be done for 5 sugar cane seasons after which a new crop has to be planted. After harvesting an area and preparing it to ratoon, the crop starts to come out after a week. That crop then takes 12 months to grow before it is harvested again.

3.2.2 A2 Farmers and Farm workers

For this study, data was collected from six A2 farms. I interviewed the farm owners, supervisors, permanent workers and casual workers from these 6 farms. I managed to gain access to these farms because my father also owns a sugar cane farm in Hippo Valley; so he managed to introduce me to some of his colleagues (farm owners) and I interviewed them. However, most of the workers I interviewed were not aware that I was one of the farmer's daughter. I believe being a farmer's daughter did not in any way affect the data I managed to collect from these farms.

As a result of FTLRP, these farmers found themselves owning sugar cane farms. They came from diverse livelihoods and as such, for the purpose of this research, I shall put them into two

groups. The first group are the farmers that stay on the farm and monitor their farms daily or very often. The second group of farmers are what are called “cell phone” farmers. These are farmers that do not stay on the farms and they have other full-time jobs outside farming; so that these farmers occasionally visit their farms and not hands-on when it comes to farming operations. The first group is advantaged in that they are able to monitor the progress on their farms by themselves and know exactly what is going on. This is unlike the second group of farmers who have to mostly rely on the feedback that they get from their supervisors.

From the interviews conducted for this research, out of the 6 farmers, 4 stayed on the farm and 2 were cell phone farmers. The cell phone farmers expressed their biggest challenge as not being there to closely monitor what is going on, on their farms. If the supervisor calls saying he needs money for a particular operational expense, the farmer has to take his word for it because he cannot be there to confirm or deny the request. On the other hand, the first group of farmers have made farming their major source of livelihood and they stay on the farm with their families, and thus are in direct control of expenditures.

These farm owners are closely linked to the Hippo Valley Mill in that they get their inputs from them and then the farmers supply Hippo Valley Mill with their sugar cane when they harvest. The Mill then pays the farmers for their cane. But the Mill also takes its money for the inputs the farmers would have taken (deducting it from the price of the sugar cane); furthermore, the Mill also charges a milling fee for using the mill equipment to process the sugar cane. Therefore, the role of Hippo Valley Mill in relation to the lives of the farmers cannot be detached as they are in a closely linked partnership.

However, most of these farmers expressed how this relationship was not a fair one and they felt exploited by the mill. This is because the mill charges exorbitant prices for the inputs that the workers use and, furthermore, during harvesting season the mill prioritises its own sugar cane over that of the A2 farmers. They also feel exploited because the mill is not paying them for the by-products it is producing from the sugar cane. Apart from producing brown sugar, the mill produces what are called by-products from sugar cane and these products provide them with extra profits. The products combined include white sugar, molasses, fibre used for generating electricity and cattle feed. However, the farmers are only paid for the molasses and nothing else. They have been fighting to be paid for years and it still has not happened.

These farmers are only able to get the good yield they receive each year because of the hard work of the farm workers on their farms. These farm workers are usually from Chiredzi and

the neighbouring rural areas in the Lowveld. Some of them have been on the farms for many years even before the FTLRP. Usually on a farm, there is one supervisor and sometimes an acting supervisor, 6 to 10 permanent workers depending on the size of the farm and then casual workers who can range from 2 to as many as the farmer needs on his farm. These workers are expected to start work at 6am in the morning till 12pm or 3pm depending on the farm. Women are usually the ones weeding and clearing the field and usually by 12pm they are done, and they go home. The men on the other hand are responsible for applying fertilisers and chemicals and for also irrigating the fields, and they usually finish at 3pm. However, on some farms, women and men work for the same amount of time and do the same jobs.



The sugar cane at 3 weeks

3.3 A2 FARMERS

In the early 2000s, during the FTLRP, people from diverse backgrounds applied for land to farm sugar cane. War veterans had evicted the white farmers from the sugar cane farms and the land was to be occupied by black farmers. During this FTLRP, adverts were put out for people to apply for these sugar cane farms. These applications went to the Ministry of Lands and Rural Resettlement who then approved or rejected the applications. The successful A2

applicants received farms that ranged from 15 hectares to about 60 hectares and some later got 100 hectares. Some of the new A2 farmers, before they acquired these farms in the early 2000s, were coming from communal areas and these farms became their hope for a better source of livelihoods for themselves and their families. One of the farmers, when he came to his farm in 2006 with his family, only had an old bicycle and no significant moveable assets. The farmer would use his bicycle as transport when he would go and buy inputs for his farm and every other errand he needed to run. This was a contrast to other people who obtained A2 sugar cane farms, as they already had high paying jobs along with houses and cars. However, to all these farmers, acquiring the land to farm sugar cane was something for which they were all grateful. This is in part because sugar cane is considered one of the most lucrative businesses in the agricultural sector in the country.

Nevertheless, as intimated already, this does not mean that the A2 farm owners do not experience difficult challenges which can limit rather than improve their socio-economic status. In this section, I discuss their experiences and challenges given their position in the sugar cane global value chain.

3.3.1 Initial Challenges

An important aspect to consider when looking at farm owners who have been integrated into the global economy through global value chains, is to see whether their productivity and livelihoods have improved since the early 2000s when they first acquired their land through fast track land reform and applications to the Ministry of Lands. Without a doubt, before fast track, sugarcane in the Lowveld was a profitable business and it still is to a certain extent. The black farm owners were very excited to get these farms, but it was a challenging experience for them. All of the farm owners said that the 2000s was a difficult time for them as they had just started farming with only minimal or no experience of farming sugar cane, and also with no adequate support from the government or Tongaat Hullet itself. Most of the farmers, because of their backgrounds, did not have knowledge on how to become a successful sugar cane farmer. This is because, before the 2000s, white farmers had been the ones who owned these farms and black people only worked on the farms. As Farmer 1 expressed it:

I became a sugar cane farmer in 2003. When we started, we did not get enough support from the government and we had to buy inputs on our own and these were very expensive.

Farmer 2 indicated:

I started being a sugar cane farmer in 2006 and before that I was a peasant farmer in the rural areas. Being a sugar cane farmer back then was new to me and we did not get adequate support from the government like the support that white farmers got from the government. For example, when white farmers got loans, they could pay them back over 3 years and we need to pay them back over 1 year.

Farmer 1 and 2 shared similar experiences to the other farmers interviewed. There was a need for support of these farmers especially from the government as they were just venturing into the world of large-scale farming. These farmers expected financial support at the very least from the government, but they did not get such support. This then meant that in the early 2000s the farmers experienced significant challenges when it came to being fully productive on their newly acquired farms. The other challenge faced by the farmers in the early 2000s was that of the white farmers refusing to exit the farms and, when they eventually exited, most of them did not leave the farms in a good condition.

Some white farmers did leave as early as when the war veterans first occupied their farms. But other white farmers did not want to leave even after the war veterans had forcefully occupied their farms. This is because in the late 1990s and into early 2000, these white farmers still owned these farms. It is only until mid-2000, when the government officialised these occupations through FTLRP, that these farms became state property. This now meant that neither the white or black farmers owned these farms, but the state now owned the farms. From there, that is when applications for the farms were opened. However, even after people applied for these farms and black people were given the farms, they were still some white farmers that were fighting to stay on their farms. Some of these white farmers actually took the black farmers to court because they were not willing to let go of their farms. They were claiming that they were the rightful owners of those farms. Farmer 4 says that:

I became a sugar cane farmer in September of 2002. We faced a lot of resistance in the early 2000s from the previous farm owners. I was issued with a court interdict being accused of stealing the whiter farmer's land. So, for over a year while the case was in court I was prohibited from using my farm until the government came and intervened and I was given back my farm. Furthermore, starting off was difficult because the previous farmer had left with some crucial inputs that were needed for the functioning of the farm such as pumps to generate irrigation water. The previous owner had also left

some portions of land unproductive, so it also took over 4 years for me to be able to start using those portions of land to plant sugar cane.

Furthermore, farmers were struggling to pay back loans that they had taken from the bank to start off their farming businesses. Farmers had taken loans from banks so that they were able to start up their farms. Banks such as CBZ Holdings were very willing to help out the farmers with such loans to start off the business. However, the biggest challenge arose when these farmers now had to pay back these loans to the bank. These loans had accumulated an interest that was more than double the money farmers had taken as loans. Since the farmers were just starting off, most of their yields were not so good. As a result, the farmers could not pay off their loans and the government had to intervene for these loans to be cleared. Farmer 6 was one of the farmers that had taken a loan from CBZ and this is what he had to say:

I got this sugar cane farm in 2001 and this is when I started farming. Initially when I started farming, it was very challenging because the previous white farmers sometimes disrupted operations on our farms. Furthermore, we encountered problems with banks such as CBZ which lend people money and then put massive interests which people were now failing to pay back. For example, I had borrowed 11 million Zimbabwe dollars from the bank and I had to pay 33 million to the bank. People ended up taking the bank to court because of the massive interests they had incurred from the bank. The government intervened and said people couldn't be charged interest which is more than the borrowed capital. As such, those that had paid more than double of what they had borrowed, their debts were cleared. That is how many of us farmers got cleared.

3.3.2 Sugarcane Profitability

Generally, all the farmers said that sugar cane farming is a lucrative business. However, they did acknowledge that it took a lot of work for them to get to a point where sugar cane farming became lucrative for them. From about 2010, they started witnessing huge improvements and gains from sugar cane farming. This is because they had more experience on how the farms should be run than when they started. They were also getting proper and timely inputs from Hippo Valley Mill which enabled their cane to grow well. However, in as much as sugar cane is a lucrative business, the farmers have expressed the high costs that go in to it. To get to the point where the sugar cane is being harvested, significant work needs to be done and it must be done correctly. There are chemicals that need to be used, fertilizers, adequate irrigation, weeding and just general upkeep of the farm. For the 6-7 months when farmers are not harvesting, the workers still need to be paid (yet the farmer will not be getting money from the

farm). However, the farmers still acknowledged that sugar cane farming has healthy returns on investments.

As Farmer 1 put it:

Sugar cane is a lucrative business. You cannot go wrong. Before I started farming, I used to run a beauty business and I left all that to come do sugar cane farming and that's the best decision I ever made. Income doesn't come all year round but when it does come it is worth it. The 6 months you harvest and get money compensate the 6 months you won't be harvesting. I am getting more money than I did when I owned a business that gave me money every single month.

3.3.3 Tongaat Hulett and A2 Farmers

In interviewing the A2 farmers, most if not all expressed how their relationship with Tongaat Hulett was a good one and simultaneously a bad one. It was good in that Tongaat Hulett was supporting the farmers through giving inputs and even lessons on sugar cane farming. It was an advantage getting inputs from Tongaat Hulett because farmers did not have to pay for them immediately, as they could pay when they had harvested. However, as noted earlier, the challenge arose when they had to pay back Tongaat Hulett for the inputs. This is because the inputs after 30 days would incur massive interests which these farmers had to pay after harvesting. The farmers did feel as if their relationship with Tongaat Hulett was not fair and Tongaat Hulett was the one benefitting the most out of it.

However, there were some farmers who expressed positive sentiments towards Tongaat Hulett and their relationship with them. One of the farmers said he had a good relationship with Tongaat Hulett because it had attributed to his successes as a farmer. Farmer 2 had this to say:

Of course Tongaat Hulett has contributed to the success of my farm. They give me inputs without me having to pay immediately. I can honestly say this is a good relationship. Other farmers are very negative towards the company [Tongaathulett], but I am not negative towards them. If the company is treating us [in a particular way] that is none of my business. Sometimes these farmers blame the company, yet they are the ones not doing what they are supposed to be doing to get a good yield.

In as much as the farmers agree that Tongaat Hulett does assist them with giving fertilizers and chemicals, they also express the challenges they face when working with Tongaat Hulett. Besides the interests on the inputs, there is also a challenge when it comes to the harvesting

season. When these A2 farmers got these farms, the government had said that Tongaat Hulett should assist these new farmers in whatever way possible so that their farms could be productive. However, the farmers did not feel like much assistance was coming from Tongaat Hulett. One of the issues the farmers expressed was that Tongaat Hulett was being unfair in that they gave preference to their own cane from their farms when harvesting and not the cane from the A2 farms. It is crucial for sugar cane to be processed on time because, if it is not, it affects the weight of the cane and the cane becomes lighter. Farmer 3 had this to say:

The working relationship with the Hippo Valley Mill [Tongaath Hulett] is not great. After harvesting we expect that the sugar cane be taken by the mill on time, but 3-5 days can pass, and our tractors are still waiting in line with our sugar cane. The problem with sugar cane staying out for too long after being harvested is that it starts fermenting and turns into alcohol. The other bundles in the farm will even stay there longer because of the delays at the mill. However, the mill will be processing their own bundles as soon as they get to the mill and this happens at the expense of our sugar cane. The longer the cane stays in the field it wilts and starts becoming lighter in weight and in turn it affects the tonnage which affects the income you get at the end of the day. Honestly, we are not working well together with the mill.

Farmer 6 also expressed serious discontent with how they have been working with Hippo Valley. He thus claimed quite graphically:

We have a horse-rider relationship with Tongaath Hulett. They give us enough so that we do not go complaining to the government, but they also give us inputs too little too late. As a farmer, if you do not complement what they give you by sourcing elsewhere for inputs then you won't have a good crop. Zimbabwe exports about 35% of its sugar and we are not being paid in foreign currency. When we ask Tongaath Hulett to pay us in foreign currency they say that that's the money they use to acquire inputs for farmers. However, when they sell the inputs to us, they sell them at market price. At the end of the day we are not benefitting from the foreign currency they are getting.

Sugar cane, as already mentioned, is not only used for producing sugar cane. There are also many other products that are produced from the sugar cane that is taken to the mill. By other products I mean other products that can be produced from sugar cane besides the main product which is sugar. These by-products, as indicated, are molasses, white sugar, cattle feed, and fibre which is used for generating electricity. These by-products are taken by Tongaat Hulett

such that the A2 farmers are not being paid for these by products, yet their sugar cane contributes to them. What frustrates the farmers is that the mill is too quick to deduct money that the farmers owe them, and they get every penny that is owed to them; but the same mill is failing to pay farmers money for the by-products. Therefore, what these farmers have done is that, through the Sugar Association of Zimbabwe, they have been requesting to be paid for these by-products. However, they have not been successful in this request because they are currently only being paid for molasses and nothing else. Famer 7 expressed that:

We are not being paid for the by-products that are being produced by the mill. For example, the fibre they get from processing the sugar cane is used to generate electricity and for cattle feed, but we never get all that money. White sugar itself is produced and sold at a higher price but that does not reflect when we get paid. There have been 17 attempts from 2009 till 2018, where the farmers have been requesting to be paid for the by-products but none of these have been successful yet. The farmers say that the day we reach an agreement is the day we will also be protected from the manipulation by Tongaat Hulett because at the moment they are taking advantage of us. For example, at a meeting we had with the Vice President Kembo Mohadi, the managing director of Tongaat Hulett said that we were sending sticks of cane to them which was not the truth.

3.3.4 Challenges farmers faced post 2010

In as much as the sugar cane business is said to be a lucrative one, the farmers are still faced with challenges in the operation of their business. Most challenges come from the fact that sugar cane is a 12-month crop but only harvested for 6 months. This means that the farmers only get income when they are harvesting. One of the biggest challenges that the farmers are facing currently is the issue of the milling charge. The milling charge is what farmers are charged for the sugar cane they produce – for it being processed by the mill. The fee used to be 26.5% of what the farmers produce, and then the farmers complained that it was too high. The Sugar Association took it up with the government and the Minister gave them an interim relief. The milling charge was reduced to 17.35% and it was supposed to run for three months. During these three months a certain consultancy company was to come and do some research to find the most appropriate milling charge.

After this research, who ever had been paid more than they should was to pay back the other party. However, this process did not take three months; instead it took the consultancy company three years to do the research. During those three years the farmers were still using the interim charge of 17.35%. The consultancy company then said the milling fee is actually 23.77% which

meant that the farmers had been overpaid by about 6%. The mill then started deducting the money the farmers had been over paid over those 3 years and these were huge amounts of money that really left the farmers disappointed. The farmers were unhappy with these deductions but there is nothing they could do about it. This 6% is already being deducted every time these farmers are harvesting. Farmer 5 had this to say about the 6% deductions:

We were doing well as farmers and then all of a sudden Hippo valley mill started saying they overpaid us, and they were going to start taking back their money. We were told that we owe them 21 000 US dollars which they have been deducting from us little by little each month. So, we have been overpaid since 2014, and we have been going to court to argue against this, but nothing has been done.

Generally, from the interviews I conducted, it seems that most of the challenges that the farmers are presently facing come from their working relationship with Tongaat Hulett. It is clear from the interviews that the issue of high cost of inputs has been a major issue as well as other charges imposed upon them by Tongaat Hulett. The farmers thus are not pleased with the exorbitant prices that they are charged by Tongaat Hulett. The farmers say there is nothing much they can do about the prices because they still want to go back to the field the next year and get a good yield. Therefore, they are forced to just buy these inputs from Tongaat Hulett. On top of paying for the fertilisers and chemicals, they also have to pay Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA) exorbitant charges for the water that is used for irrigation. They are charged tax by the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) and they are charged as well for ploughing. When ploughing out, the farmer has to pay for seed cane, reaping, disking and ridging. This also involves paying for diesel used for the tractors when ploughing and when harvesting. These costs incurred by the A2 farmers incur affect dramatically the amount of money which they end up getting at the end of the harvesting season for their sugar cane.

Some farmers, because of the challenges that they have faced, have thought it better to obtain loans from Bank ABC. This would be a personal transaction that is not directly linked to the mill. The bank will be the one which buys the inputs from a supplier (Hippo Valley) and they start deducting their money from the farmers slowly. Some of the farmers are saying that the interests incurred from doing business with bank ABC will be better than directly dealing with Hippo Valley Mill. The idea is that if the Bank buys the inputs from Hippo Valley, then the farmers do not incur the 30-day interest when they buy inputs on credit. At the end of the day, they only deal with interest and charges from the bank. However, there is not much evidence

of whether this notion is true or not, since this is an idea that farmers are looking into and actually have not started using.

3.3.5 Relationship between Farmer and Workers

During the interviews, when I asked the farmers to explain the relationship between them and the farm workers, all of them said they had a good relationship with their workers and supervisors. The farmers that stay on the farms seem to have a more engaged relationship with all their workers not just the supervisor. The farmers that do not stay on the farm and have other jobs, often known as “cell phone farmers”, usually have a stronger relationship with their supervisors. This is because they constantly need to call the supervisor to find out what is happening on the farm since they cannot be physically there every day to see what is happening on the ground. The farmers all claim that the workers just need to be paid their wages every month on time and this allows for a good relationship with their workers. It was a comment that all the farmers gave which gives the impression that the farmers consider paying their farm workers on time as one of the signs of having a good relationship with them. Farmer 3 said that:

If you want your workers to be happy, the most important thing is to pay them on time and you won't have a problem with them. The problem is we do not pay them on time especially the male farmers. These people work so hard starting as early as 6am each day and their job is taxing so they deserve to be paid on time. They cannot be going for months without being paid; that is just ridiculous.

In as much as the farmers view money as an important aspect for their relationship with their workers, they are also very concerned with the self-development of all of their farm workers. They acknowledge that a relationship with the workers goes beyond just paying them, to actually being concerned and responsible for their basic needs. This notion of self-development can be seen by what Farmer 2 does on his farm. He says that:

My workers are supposed to work between 6am and 3pm but I allow them to go home at 12 pm. I told them to use the three hours they would have used on my farm to do other projects that give them extra income. However, some of them just see this as an opportunity to go home early and they do not utilise this time wisely. Since I stay on the farm, I assist any of the workers that need my assistance even if they are not from my farm. They can come and knock on my door at any time. I also know there is a water problem in the compounds where the workers live so I have put a well for them. This well

is open to everyone and anyone to come and get some fresh water to drink. My plan is to get money so that I can put a solar tank and close the well and the workers can get water from the tank. I also have a grinding mill which the workers can also use to grind their maize. I have put all these things in place to make life easier for the workers.

Some of the farmers also express how they view their workers as family and treat them like they would their own family. One of the farmers says that if you treat the workers well, they will work well and not sabotage your farm operations. Some of the workers have worked on the same farm for 5 years, 10 years, 12 years or even more. One of the farmers has had his supervisor for 17 years since 2001 when he got the farm. He says that he has encountered challenges, but they have managed to develop a good working relationship and as a result they work towards getting a good yield each year. Therefore, generally the farm owners, from their perspective, have a good relationship with their supervisors and workers.

3.4 FARM SUPERVISORS

Farm supervisors form part of the permanent workers on each farm. However, at the same time, they act as the manager of the farm and assess the day to day running of that farm. In this sense, they occupy an in-between position on the farms. These supervisors get courses on how to run the farms from Tongaat Hulett and this gives them knowledge on the holistic functioning of the farm. This ensures that the supervisors can teach the new workers what to do and that they can also make sure that they are doing their jobs correctly. The supervisors are the ones that are usually the mediator between the farmer and the workers especially if the farmer is a cell phone farmer. If the workers have any grievances, they take it up with the supervisor who then passes on the message to the farmer, and the process is vice-versa. The supervisor reports directly to the farm owner and the workers report to him. As such, the supervisors get paid more money than the other workers since they have a managerial role to play. The responsibility of these supervisors is heightened especially on farms where there are cell phone farmers.

3.4.1 Improvement or Decline since Fast Track

Of the three supervisors that I managed to interview, 2 of them had worked on the farms before the fast track land reform programme began and they managed to share insights on the working conditions pre and post 2000. Both supervisors had worked on the white farms as just permanent workers and not supervisors. They both expressed how they found it better to work on the A2 farms now that they are owned by the black farmers. This is because they managed to establish a strong relationship with black farmers compared to their previous relationship

with white farmers. However, what has not changed is the channel of communication on the farms with the supervisor being the middle man. Though no doubt their views on the A2 farm was in part coloured by the fact that they are now supervisors, they did insist that communication with the black farmers is more open and flexible, even for the main workforce. The workers could actually go and speak to the farmer when a need arose. This is what Supervisor 2 said about his work experience pre-2000:

I started working on these sugar cane farms in 1980 when there were still white farm owners. When we worked for the white people there was a language barrier because they spoke in English and we [farm workers] were not that fluent in English. However, the white farmers liked speaking directly to the supervisor, then the supervisor would relay the message. Sometimes we would just wake up and changes have already been made regardless of whether they had a negative or positive impact on us. Furthermore, when we worked for the white farmers, they did not allow us to have any other projects outside of working on their farms. That meant we weren't allowed to start our own gardens which would give us more income. I mean we had these gardens before and as soon as the white farmers found out about them, they destroyed all of them. This is because, they had shops and butcheries and they wanted us to buy meat and food from them. Even if you did not have money, they would allow you to get the meat on credit and then at the end of the month they took their money from your salary. And boy, did they make sure that they took every cent you owed them to the last penny!

Both supervisors claimed that the black farmers are more approachable, and that they felt a sense of belonging to the farm. There was a feeling of being able to relate to black farmers which was not the case for black supervisors under the command of white farmers. The black workforce was not given the opportunity to pursue other lines of livelihoods, and sometimes encouraged to do so by the A2 farmers (such as Farmer 2, as noted above). Overall, then, as expressed by Supervisor 1:

We are working together as black people now, so we are more open to talk about things and issues concerning the farm.

3.4.2 Benefits and Disadvantages of being a Supervisor

One of the perks of being a supervisor is that they get training on the daily processes of the farm. They are taught about how to treat the cane at different stages and when to apply fertilisers and chemicals to the cane. The supervisors are then able to assist the farm workers

with their duties on the farm. The supervisors acknowledged that they were getting support from Hippo Valley mill through these training sessions they get for free.

Another advantage of being a supervisor is the wages that they get. Supervisors on the farms get paid between US\$150 and US\$250 per month depending on the farm owner and on the size of the farm. If the farm is big then the supervisor is paid more because there will be more work to be done and the same applies when the farm is small as the supervisor is paid less. This means that a supervisor is paid double what a permanent worker gets paid when it is cutting season. The advantage is that the supervisors do not get their wages cut or reduced, whether it is off season or cutting season. Therefore, they have a steady income which allows them to look after their families. One of the supervisors said that the advantage of being a supervisor is that you get enough money to make sure that all of his children manage to go to school and are also well fed. Furthermore, children do not need to move schools all the time because supervisors receive accommodation and will be staying in the same area as the schools.

There are also some disadvantages that the supervisors encounter. The most common query amongst the supervisors was that they need a raise in their salaries because of the economic situation in Zimbabwe. Bank transfers and Ecocash transfers, which are used often in Zimbabwe because of cash shortages, are no longer equivalent to the US dollar meaning that their salaries are not worth what they used to be a year ago; they are now less in real terms. The rate of transfers is now US\$ 1: US\$3,5 for bank transfers or Ecocash. The wages that they receive are increasingly unable to sustain the supervisors and their families especially the months that they pay school fees and have to buy school uniforms. The other disadvantage of being a supervisor is that they rarely get leave days because they are the only person in that position on the farm. Supervisor 1 said:

As a supervisor I do not get my leave days during the year. When I ask the farm owner to pay me for the leave days I am supposed to have during the year, that money never comes. When I ask to go on leave the farm owner asks me who is going to take care of the farm, so I end up not going if it is not an emergency. However, the point I am arguing is that I should be paid for those leave days where I actually work. Every worker is entitled to be paid for their leave days.

Another grievance that the supervisor had was with regards to their needs and indeed of other workers as well. These needs focus on social reproduction of workers and their families and are quite significant when it comes to assessing the extent to which social upgrading or

downgrading is taking place amongst the A2 sugar cane workforce. These needs include: food, water, warmth, security and safety. From the interviews done with the supervisors (and the other workers), it does not appear that social upgrading is taking place. Instead there is evidence of social downgrading in the lives of farm workers when examining their social conditions of existence. In as much as the workers are given houses, these houses have not been maintained over the years and, as a result, they do not have access to clean water, sanitation and electricity in their compounds. Supervisor 1 claimed the following:

We do not have water and electricity, and this has been the case for years. Recently they were strong winds that lifted some of the roofs off people's houses in the compound and some of those houses are still damaged and the farmers are not doing anything about it. We also want to watch DSTV but if I buy a decoder how will I watch it without electricity. The farmers with workers in these compounds ought to maintain the houses and make sure that the workers are safe.

Therefore, social reproduction is a challenge it seems for supervisors and likely even more so for the general labour force on the A2 sugar cane farms. In this context, I now turn to examining the labour force on these farms, starting with permanent workers and then moving on to the non-permanent labour force.

3.5 PERMANENT WORKERS

For this thesis they were 6 permanent workers that were interviewed. They were 4 female permanent workers and 2 male permanent workers interviewed. Permanent workers are the ones that have been given a permanent job on the farms. When they start working on the farms, they sign contracts which are in force until they leave or are dismissed from the farms. These men and women have a duty to ensure that, at the end of the 12 months, the farmer has obtained a good yield and hence a higher level of profit. These workers are ensured a steady wage and they obtain more benefits than the temporary or casual workers. Permanent workers are given houses by the farmer in the compounds, and they can stay in this house as long as they are still working on the farms.

These workers are expected at work every morning at 6am and they finish work at 12pm or 3pm depending on whether they are male or female and also depending on their farm owner. The females finish work earlier, but this does not apply on all farms. On some farms, the workers work the same amount of time and do the same jobs and, on other farms, they work for different time periods and they also do different jobs. Usually the job descriptions are as

follows: for the men they put fertiliser and they irrigate the farms; and women do the weeding which is called “*kusakura*” in Shona. They also pick the trash around the farm during harvesting time. However, both male and female permanent workers do not have the duty to cut cane as this is done by temporary workers. Therefore, most of the sugar cane workers want to be permanent workers because they get housing, which means they can stay with their family; as well, there is a nearby school where permanent workers send their children.

3.5.1 White or Black farmers: pre-2000s and post 2000s

The permanent workers had different views on the experiences of working on the sugar cane farms pre-2000. Some of the workers preferred to work for the white farmer and some of the workers think that it is better working for the black farmers now. The first group says that, when white farmers were still on the farms, they treated the workers well and made sure they had all their basic needs met, including ensuring their houses remained in decent condition. When black people came onto the farms and took over, they did not manage to maintain or enhance the infrastructure which the white farmers had constructed. This is what permanent farm worker 1 said:

It was better when we worked for the white farmers because they bought us equipment to use on the farm, such as gumboots and protective clothing. The white farmer made us work very hard, but he used to pay us on time and this is unlike the black farmers who usually do not pay us on time. White farmers also used to give us leave days more often than we get now. Black farmers will make you work and work and when you ask for leave it is not easy to get it. White farmers could give us bonuses when we worked hard and reached our target, but black farmers do not do that. The black farmers always have an excuse when we have grievances. They tell us they do not have money and things are tough and we are expected to understand.

Interestingly, one of the farm workers said it was hard to work for the white farmers because they were always on the farm, and hence there was constant surveillance. This was the white farmers’ full-time job, so they would be monitoring everything that the workers were doing. The supervisor’s job was just to survey the farm and communicate with the farmer and workers, but there was always the constant presence of the farmer. The permanent labourers would work and work until the farmer would come and say it is time to stop and then they would be free to go home; in this way, daily working hours varied considerably and without warning. Nevertheless, in general, the permanent workers tended to be quite disparaging of the A2 sugar cane farmers, at least comparatively speaking.

The A2 black farmers, it was argued, have been failing to look after the farm workers as well as white farmers did. One of these workers said that, in the pre-2000 period at the end of the month when they got paid, the white farmers would allow them to go visit their families in the rural areas for a couple of days and then they would come back. Furthermore, during December they received bonuses and they were given a longer leave to be with their families. However, these responses differed farm to farm and between farm labourers, and this in large part depended upon particular experiences with specific white farmers in the past and current experiences with particular A2 farmers.

Thus, other workers were grateful that white people do not own the farms anymore because they believe in the African Proverb of *Ubuntu* which means “I am, because We are”. These workers believe that having black farmers is better because they can relate better to them and they are more understanding of their experiences. However, overall, there were different responses to whether farm workers preferred white or black farmers.

3.5.2 Basic Needs and Working Conditions

The living conditions of the farm workers is very important when looking at social upgrading and downgrading. Rossi (2013) thus refers to those measurable standards which refer to the aspects of a worker’s well-being that are easily observable and quantifiable, such as wages, physical well-being and employment security (Barrientos et al, 2011: 324). Therefore, this discussion focuses on these measurable standards as a yardstick to determine whether these workers are experiencing social upgrading or not. From the interviews, it is clear that there are some areas where workers’ lives are not getting better (downgrading) post-2000 and there are some areas that have stayed stagnant post 2000, and again some areas of improvement post-2000 (social upgrading).

The permanent workers are provided with houses in the compound called the “*komboni*” in Shona. These compounds existed during the time of the white sugar cane farmers. About 3-5 farms share one compound and it is the duty of the farmers to maintain these compounds where their workers stay. However, from the interviews with the workers, these compounds have not been well maintained since the white farmers left. These compounds are now in bad shape, most of them do not have electricity, no clean water and no bathrooms to use. The workers have to get water from the well located at the house of one of the farmers, and then they also get water from the dam and canals. For toilets, the workers and their families just usually use the sugar cane fields or somewhere in the bush. There is no proper sanitation for these workers. As one of the female permanent workers 3 declared:

Our living conditions are not good at all; we have no access to water at the compounds where we stay. The war veterans [the A2 farmers] should join together and ensure the upkeep of these compounds but they are not doing that. People go inside the sugar cane fields to be able to use the bathroom because our bathrooms have not been functioning. We do not have water to drink as well at our compounds, so we go to one of the farmers' house who has a well and we get water to drink from there. If you want to bath you have to go to the dam and bath there. We get water to wash dishes and do laundry from the dam as well. When the white farmers were here, we used to have electricity, clean water to drink and wash, and we also had bathrooms in the compound.

These sanitation issues faced by the workers on the sugar cane farms is one of their most significant grievances. All of the workers spoke about the lack of water at the compounds as disadvantaging them and as a problem that needs urgent attention. However, these workers need these jobs so that they are able to look after their families. Some of the workers have families in the rural areas (i.e. communal areas) who are relying on them to send money and groceries at the end of the month, so they just continue working. The living conditions of these workers is a clear indication that social upgrading is not taking place when you look at such measurable standards. Workers are simply being valued for the labour that they can provide without, it seems, any significant social upgrading being pursued by the A2 farmers for the workers.

At the same time, the permanent workers have advantages such as financial and job security and also medical cover. A permanent worker has access to the Hippo Valley clinic for free. The worker simply needs to provide evidence that he or she is permanently employed and to provide details about the farm and farmer at which the employment contract exists. This saves significant money for the workers because even their families get medical cover as well, depending though upon the specific agreement between the A2 farmer and the permanent workers. Another advantage of being a permanent worker is a guaranteed salary at the end of the month because of job security. On most of the farms, permanent workers are receiving between US\$80 and US\$100 per month when it is cutting or harvesting season. When it is off season, they get between US\$50 and US\$70; but, again this depends on the farm. They receive lower wages during off season because the farmer will not be generating any income from the farm, so he/she cannot pay their full salaries. However, these workers expressed that this lower wage rate significantly disadvantages them, as their household costs remain the same throughout the year and they struggle during off season to meet their basic needs. Many of the

workers said that their farmers paid them on time every single month without fail, but other workers are not being paid consistently. One of the permanent workers 4 expressed discontent because the farmer was not paying them on time and he actually owed them two months' salary. This is what she had to say:

We have not been paid consistently, so we have been striking because we have not been paid for two months. The worst part is that the farmer claims not to know that he owes us money and he doesn't want to pay us for those two months. We even went as far going to the bank to get statements showing the two months that the farmer had not paid us, but he is still denying he owes us money. We still haven't gotten our money back, so we end up just working even though we are supposed to be striking. This is because the farm owner asked everyone to go back to work saying he had heard our query, but he has done nothing about it.

When workers are not paid, they can only do so much to protect their rights and they do not have a union which defends them when such problems arise. Though they are protected by labour laws, most workers are unfamiliar with the details of this legislation and are not able to use the laws effectively if at all.

When it came to gender equality in terms of working on the farms, the workers felt that both men and women were treated equally on the farms. They were given the same wages every single month and no one felt disadvantaged in relation to others when asked during the interviews. This is despite the fact that, on most farms, the roles of male workers are different from female workers and even the hours they work are different. Officially, these farm workers are supposed to work on a ticket system. Workers are expected to sign in and sign out, which thus indicates when they have come to work and how many hours they worked. At the end of the month, these tickets are used to determine how much money each worker should be paid. If a worker laboured each day for the stipulated hours, then he or she would get a full salary and if he or she did not work the full hours then the wage would be reduced accordingly. However, on all the farms that I interviewed, these ticket systems have not been used since the black A2 farmers came. This means that workers might not be at work at certain times, even during leave, knowing that they will obtain their full wage.

3.5.3 Relationship with Supervisor and Owner

Generally, the permanent workers claim to have a good working relationship with their supervisors; this is because most of them have been working together on the same farms for

years. These workers are then able to create even a personal relationship with the supervisor outside of their working relationship. However, their relationship with the farmer is not as close as the one they have with the supervisor. If the farmer stays on the farm, then they are likely to have a closer relationship with that farmer than the one who comes to the farm once in a while. They have a good working relationship with the supervisor because he/she is the one that takes up their grievances to the farm owner. Furthermore, especially on farms where the farmer is a cell phone farmer, the supervisor has the authority to give the farm workers leave days. Therefore, their supervisors are their ‘go to person’ for anything that they need around the farm.

3.6 TEMPORARY OR CASUAL WORKERS

Casual workers work seasonally on the farm. Literature shows that farmers usually prefer hiring a significant number of casual workers because of the ebbs and flows of a typical agricultural season. During key times of the agricultural season, casual workers are employed and, during down times, they can be let go – hence not needing to pay these workers at such times. There are two groups of casual workers: the contractual workers that come and do the same job as the permanent workers when the need arises, and the cane cutters that are hired when it is harvesting season. In general, casual workers are disadvantaged compared to permanent workers but the differences are not as significant as expected.

3.6.1 Working Conditions of Casual Workers

Casual workers unlike permanent workers do not have job security. They are only assured a job when there are extra hands needed on the farm or when it is harvesting season and they are needed to cut the cane. Therefore, some of the casual workers would prefer to become permanent workers so that they get the perks that permanent workers are afforded (perks such as access to medical care from Hippo Valley clinic). One of the casual workers 2 said:

I have been a temporary worker for a year now and it is tough being a casual worker. I actually want a permanent position, but I haven't been able to get one. It is better being a permanent worker because you have financial security, and you know at the end of each month you will be getting your salary. Being a temporary worker there is no security, you can be laid off at any time. So, it becomes hard to make futuristic monetary plans because you might just wake up without a job.

However, there are some casual workers who have been casual workers even before fast track and they are still casual workers willingly. This is because they believe that being a casual

worker allows them flexibility without necessarily earning less pay than permanent workers. The same casual worker 2 thus added:

In as much as we get paid the same as the permanent workers our jobs are not guaranteed and theirs are.

Based on the interviews, it appears that a cane cutter can actually earn as much as supervisor, so they find it better to not pursue a permanent job. When casual cane cutting workers work in the field, they are given what are called “hobhos”, which is a section of the farm where they are supposed to cut cane. They are paid US\$5- US\$7 for each “hobho” that they are able to complete. In a week, the workers are able to do about 4-5 “hobhos” which means they get about US\$42-49 per week at most. These workers work every day of the week but since their job is so strenuous, they are given one day off (Saturday or Sunday); but some workers still choose to work the whole week. When it comes to getting paid, on most farms, the contractual workers (other than the cane cutters) are paid the same amount as permanent workers as they are just on a shorter contract. They get similar perks to the permanent workers except that they cannot live with their families in the compounds and they cannot go to the clinic for free. They have to go to a general hospital where they cover their own medical bills.

Of course, the advantage of being a permanent worker would be the fact that a regular wage every month is guaranteed for the entire year, instead of only 6 months a year. One of the workers who preferred being a casual worker and has been a casual worker for 9 years, worker 6 had this to say:

I started working as a casual worker in 2009 and I've never actually wanted to be a permanent worker. This is because I believe that being a casual worker is more profitable than being a casual worker. As a casual worker, if a contract job arises, you can just go to work and then get your money and move on to the next job. You also find other avenues that get you money when you're a casual worker because you'll be flexible.

Another worker also said he preferred being a casual worker because he is able to earn more money and also go to the rural (communal) areas to plant when it is off season.

Cane cutters usually get preferential treatment in comparison to the other contractual workers. This is because they perform a crucial job of ensuring that the sugar cane is harvested on time and, in turn, the harvesting season brings forth a good yield. They are provided with food during the day so that they have energy to execute their jobs, although most of the workers were not

pleased with the standard of the food. Most of them just ate so they could finish their “hobhos”. However, the cane cutters were all complaining about the lack of protective gear. Some of them have protective gear from past years but now it is tattered and torn and they need new gear. The farmers have been mostly failing to provide the worker with adequate and correct protective clothing. At the end of the day, some of the workers have to go in to the field with their own clothing and risk getting hurt. One of the workers, casual worker 4 commented on this by saying:

Our relationship with the farm supervisor is good because they will be trying to be nice to us so that we cut their cane; they do not want to anger us. They give us food during the day when we are working and promise to attend to the grievances that we have. We have raised issues of accommodation, water and toilets. We do not have enough protective gear that is required when we're cutting cane. We are supposed to get safety shoes when we cut cane, but we end up getting gumboots. Gumboots are supposed to be used by people irrigating, not us. However, we just use them because you cannot go into the field with open shoes. These gumboots do not protect us fully from the knives we use, but the metal part in front of the safety shoes does; this is why we need them. Furthermore, when it comes to cutting equipment, you usually get one knife, but you need about three knives. This means you have to go and buy extra knives because at the end of the day you realise you have a wife and children that need to be fed and go to school so you just need to get the job done.

Generally, though, cane cutters have a good working relationship with the supervisors and farmers if only because most of them have been casual workers for some years. When it is cutting season, the farmers actually call the cane cutters and ask them to come and start harvesting. However, as one of the workers said, it is not every farm that cane cutters will go to and work on. They have discovered amongst themselves which farmers pay and which ones do not. There is one farmer for instance who still owes money to cane cutters from last cutting season, so this year they did not go to work on his field. The ones who went were the “new guys” who did not know that this and other specific farmers do not like paying workers.

There are also casual workers who worked for white farmers and some say that working for white and black farmers is almost the same. The only difference is that white farmers used to pay on time and the A2 farmers can pay much later than the agreed date. One of the causal workers 5 shared his experience of working for the white farmers and he said:

I started working as a casual worker in the 1990s and I was working for the white farmers. I mean work is work but working for the white farmers was much better. I had my own house and bathing room. I was able to take nice hot showers and also had nice clean water to drink. However, right now we do not have all that anymore. We are drinking water from the canal and bath in the canal because we do not have any clean water nearby. The well by one of the farmers' house is too far and we cannot go there every single day to get drinking water. Instead of staying in my house alone I share with 6-9 other people. I cannot even stay with my family here because they will have nowhere to stay. We do not have bathrooms but, when the white farmers were here, they built bathrooms for us. These black farmers have completely failed to maintain the compounds as they had been in the 1990s. I mean I would really like to be a permanent worker, but black farmers do not like employing a lot of permanent workers because they want to limit their responsibilities.

3.6.2 Basic Needs of Casual Workers

Usually literature on commercial farms shows that casual workers are not afforded the basic needs that are afforded to permanent workers. However, in the case of the sugar cane farms under study, the casual workers seem to have similar (sub-standard) living conditions, though they do not get the same employment perks as the permanent workers. Casual workers, during the time they have to work on the sugar cane farms, are given houses in the “kombonis” (that is the compounds) together with permanent workers. The casual workers unlike the permanent workers cannot stay in these houses with their families. This is because they stay 3 to 5 workers in one house because insufficient housing is available. When they stay in these compounds, they face the same challenges that the permanent workers are facing, such as lack of water, electricity and bathrooms. They also get water from the canal and the dams to be able to bath and cook and for their daily use. They also use the sugar cane fields as their bathrooms.

The cane cutters though can earn as much as between US\$150 and US\$200 a month depending on how well they work, which is what the supervisors get. If they work 6 days a week they get almost US\$150 and if they work the entire week, they can get US\$200. However, they will not have access to medical facilities like permanent workers would. Thus, in considering the pros and cons of permanent work, cane cutters focus on the advantages of high wages against the disadvantages of the no perks and benefits, with the living conditions really not relevant because all workers reside in the same compounds. One of the cane cutters, casual worker 1 reasoned in this way:

I can get up US\$200 a month if I work faithfully each day. This is more than what a regular permanent worker gets, but still I think being a permanent worker is better. This is because you get access to free medical attention at Hippo Valley clinic. If you're a casual worker, you do not get access to this facility, so you have to take yourself to the general hospital and you pay an arm and a leg so that you get treated.



The Kombonis

3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on my case study of A2 sugar cane farms, and sought to understand the position of both the farmers and workers in the global value chain, that is, at the production end of the value chain. It is clear that workers, both permanent and temporary, live in inadequate accommodation on the farms and that their wages (though subject to variation) indicate the ongoing presence of a low wage agricultural sector in commercial farming in Zimbabwe. At the same time, A2 sugar cane farmers seek to maximise their profitability and do at times make considerable profit, but they are in constant tension with Tongaat Hulett in large part because of the significant costs incurred as out growers of the company. Thus, while Tongaat Hulett seeks to maximise their 'extraction' of value from the global chain, this is done at the expense of the A2 farmers. In turn, A2 farmers are clearly seeking to minimise the

adverse effects of their out grower status (vis-à-vis Tongaat Hulett) by minimising their labour costs. This argument is developed more fully in the concluding chapter to the thesis.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this section is to give a general overview and conclusion of the whole thesis. This overview will be in three parts. Firstly, it will look at the secondary objectives of the thesis and explain how the thesis has managed to achieve those goals. In other words, it will consider whether or not the aims that were set out in the research were achieved. Furthermore, this means looking at how these aims were achieved throughout the thesis. Secondly, the thesis will address the main objective and see how this thesis relates to it. What this means is looking at the theory of the thesis and seeing whether it speaks directly to the main objective or main goal of the thesis. Lastly, this section will look at the limitations of this research and areas for further research. In other words, it will recommend possible areas of research around this research subject to other scholars. Furthermore, it will also consider the areas of limitation for this particular research paper.

4.2 ADDRESSING THE SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

The secondary objectives of this thesis can be put into three goals and this section shall explain each of these goals to see how they were achieved throughout the thesis. The first goal was to *examine the general sugar cane value chain globally the Zimbabwean sugar industry*. This thesis did examine the general sugar cane value chain at a global level. It looked at what happens from the conception of the product to its end product. This meant looking at the general value chain of sugar cane, and this thesis did that. The value chain was seen as one that generally comprised of growing, harvesting, transporting the cane, milling, storing it and finally shipping it to different parts of the world. It also looked at how globally the sugar industry has been booming with Brazil as the leading country of the 120 countries that are growing and producing sugar cane. It went on to look at what is considered as the global agricultural season of sugar cane and how it is grown. This thesis also considered some statistics of the production of sugar cane at a global scale. Furthermore, three case studies were used, namely: Brazil, Australia and South Africa. These case studies were a way of zoning into three large producing countries and considering how their sugar cane value chains operate.

Furthermore, this first objective narrowed down the research to look at the Zimbabwean sugar cane industry. To do this, this thesis looked at the location of these farms which is in the Lowveld of Zimbabwe. These farms are owned by Tongaat Hulett and A2 farmers. It showed how these A2 farmers were important to this research. It also considered the history of the

sugar cane industry which meant looking at the how the farms were previously owned by white farmers until FTLRP in the early 2000s when the black farmers got these farms It also looked at the season in which sugar cane is grown there and the seasonal conditions that are ideal for its successful growth. Therefore, this goal has been achieved through the contents found in the literature review section of this thesis.

The second objective of this thesis was *to examine the productivity, profitability and lives of A2 sugar cane farmers since fast track land reform program till present (2018) AND to understand the successes and challenges the farmers experience as a result of being integrated into sugar value chains*. The first part of this objective is covered in the empirical chapter through the interviews that were conducted with the farm owners. From these interviews, these farmers agreed that sugar cane farming is a productive and profitable business. However, these farmers did face numerous challenges when they acquired these farms through FTLRP. However, many farms starting kick starting after that and by 2010 most of the farms had been experiencing a good yield. However, all this cannot be understood without looking at the successes and challenges of these A2 through integration into the sugar value chains. These farmers have experienced successes in their farming such as getting a good yield and getting a profit from sugar cane farming which has allowed some of them to buy vehicles, tractors and start different investments.

However, being a sugar cane farmer is not all about successes, these men and women are faced with numerous challenges. They have to pay workers monthly even during off seasons and they are not getting any money. They also need to pay for transport charges when taking their cane to the mill and also pay ZINWA for water they use at the farms. They also have to buy a lot of inputs for the sugar cane and Hippo Valley Mill has not been giving to them discounts or favourable prices. Sugar cane as noted in this thesis is a high cost crop and as such it requires a lot of input from the farmer which in turn can affect the profit he or she gets at the end. Thus, one can conclude based on the data collected on this thesis that sugar cane farming when done right it is a profitable business although it has challenges as well. Therefore, data on this thesis shows that the second goal of this thesis has been achieved.

The third goal was *to examine the lives of permanent and casual farmworkers, including wages and working conditions on A2 sugar cane farms; and to establish whether these farm workers are experiencing social upgrading or downgrading by being integrated into global economy*. These two goals are interlinked so they shall be discussed together. The lives of the workers

were firstly discussed in the literature review by scholars such as Gukurume and Mushuku (2012), who described the dire living conditions that the workers in the Lowveld are experiencing. Most of their compounds do not have clean tap water, no bathrooms and no electricity and this has been the case since the 2000s after FTLRP. However, on the other hand, these workers are getting paid fair wages, the permanent workers have access to medical treatment. This thesis also looked at the differences that exist between permanent and casual workers on the A2 farms. It can be said that, there are not any vast differences between these two groups except the advantages permanent workers have such as job security and medical access. Casual workers as mentioned by Rossi (2013), seem to be usually more disadvantaged when working in any industry and the same can be said for those that work on the farms. These workers are generally happy with their lives and working conditions, but they all complain about their living conditions.

This then brings us to establishing whether these workers are experiencing social upgrading or downgrading even when they are part of the global economy. From this thesis it can be noted that the workers experience both social upgrading and downgrading although the latter predominates the former. They are experiencing upgrading in that, they are getting housing, consistent wages, some access to health care and their children can go to the school close to the farm. However, downgrading is experienced in the way they live in the housing provided. These compounds have not been maintained by the black A2 farmers and as such they are now degrading. Most workers get water from the dam or canals, so they are able to bath, clean and do other things around their houses. There is really downgrading seen in this regard in the lives of these workers even considering their living conditions pre-2000 and post 2000. Therefore, from the data collected for this thesis, this third goal has been achieved.

4.3 ADDRESSING THE MAIN OBJECTIVE

This part considers the main objective of this thesis, to establish how it has been achieved through the research that was done. The main objective of this thesis is: *to critically examine the lives of farmers and farm labourers in the A2 fast track Lowveld sugar cane farms in Zimbabwe in the context of global value chains*. This goal was achieved through two sections, the literature review and the empirical chapter. The literature review set out to examine the lives of farmers and workers through the context of global value chains and this was the theoretical framework for this thesis. The main aspect of these chains was that of economic and social upgrading. These GVCs assumed that the occurrence of upgrading when an industry is integrated into the global economy, led to economic upgrading which would automatically

lead to social upgrading. Therefore, in this instance they assumed that, as the sugar cane industry is integrated into the global economy, the lives of the farmers should economically upgrade and as a result of this the lives of their workers should socially upgrade. It was a trickle-down theory which would be taking place or rather a top-down approach on upgrading. This thesis examined this notion to consider whether this is true or not and to do this it also looked at other scholars that argued against this notion and said that integration into the global economy can result in social downgrading for the workers instead of upgrading.

Therefore, looking at the lives of farmers and farm workers the conclusion gathered from this thesis showed the following. The sugar industry is booming and the A2 black farmers have largely benefitted economically from being integrated into these chains. There has been an improvement in their lives since the early 2000s when they acquired the farms. From around 2010 most of these farms were experiencing a bountiful harvest and a good profit from sugar cane farming. They have encountered numerous challenges in sugar cane farming over the years. However, the general outcome for the farmers that have been looking after their farms (fertilizing on time, weeding and irrigating) has been largely positive. It is without a doubt that these farmers are benefitting more from being integrated into these sugar cane value chains than the workers. Therefore, these farmers are experiencing economic upgrading.

The workers on the other hand, their livelihoods show that there has been some upgrading that has taken place to some extent but at the same time they are experiencing social downgrading even when integrated into the value chain. Some of these workers worked on these farms pre-2000 when they were still owned by white farmers. Their experience shows that although the working conditions were sometimes tough, their living conditions were good. They had access to clean tap water, electricity and bathrooms. However, these workers note that when the black A2 farmers started owning these farms, their living conditions started changing. The black A2 farmers did not maintain the compounds and as a result they started deteriorating. In 2018 when these interviews were conducted, all the farm workers interviewed spoke about the bad living conditions at their compounds. These compounds are overcrowded (especially where casual workers stay), they have no water, electricity or bathrooms. In other words, their lives are not improving but have actually become worse. This is an indication of social downgrading.

However, they have been experiencing social upgrading in that, they are getting consistent wages, some get protective clothing, permanent workers have access to the health care facilities, and they are able on most occasions to buy food and take their children to school.

However, social upgrading includes good working and living conditions not having one without the other. Therefore, social upgrading has been seen but there is also social downgrading that is taking place, showing the neglect that is often given to the workers at the bottom of these value chains. The same can be seen in Chinese factories from the case study given in the thesis, that these workers play a crucial role to the functioning of their industries, yet they are the least valued in terms of being compensated. Therefore, in answering this research question, economic upgrading does not automatically lead to social upgrading, instead it can lead to social downgrading. The notion of social upgrading should be considered separately to that of economic upgrading, it cannot be seen as just a result of economic upgrading. Those at the top of these chains must make those at the bottom of these chains a priority.

4.4 LIMITATIONS AND AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The limitations of this research would be as follows. The sample size of the participants was small for this research. It would have been more ideal to interview more farmers and workers from different farms to get different and varying opinions on what is happening on the sugar cane farms. Another limitation would be finding literature on sugar cane farming. The sugar cane value chain in Zimbabwe does not have much written on it and hence it made it difficult to write much on it. Furthermore, a limitation was that, the workers and managers at Tongaat Hulett could not be interviewed. These people are important to the value chain in the sugar industry because this is where the cane is taken, and sugar produced. Therefore, senior management is especially important to this kind of research as it gives a perspective of the upgrading that is taking place along the value chain, looking specifically at who benefits from this chain and who doesn't benefit. The inability to study the entire value chain also became a limitation for this study.

In concluding this thesis, the areas I would recommend as areas for future research would be to look at A2 farmers more broadly in other value chains in Zimbabwe. For example, looking at the maize value chain, wheat value chain and other agricultural value chains in Zimbabwe. It is important to consider these areas and look at different aspects of GVCs beyond even economic and social upgrading.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Rhodes University — Department of Sociology

Participant Consent form (Interviews)

Name of researcher:

Brief description of the research topic:

Declaration

1. I confirm that the purpose of the research and the nature of my participation have been explained to me verbally or in writing.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason - however I commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur, or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.
3. I understand that data collected during the study, will be used by the researcher and that my personal details gathered during this research, especially my name or identity, will be kept private.
4. I agree to be interviewed and to allow audio or video recordings and transcriptions to be made of the interview.
5. I have been informed by the researcher that the tape recordings will be erased once the report is written.
6. I also give permission for the tape recordings to be retained after the study and for them to be utilised for academic purposes only.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix B

Questions for farmers

1. When did you become a sugar cane farmer?
2. How is it being a farmer in the early 2000s after fast-track land reform and being a farmer after 2010?
3. What are the challenges that you are facing as a farmer?
4. Would you say sugar cane farming is a lucrative business? YES or No and provide a reason why?
5. How is your working relationship with the Hippo Valley mill? And does this relationship contribute to your answer on question 4?
6. How is your working relationship with the farmworkers?

Appendix C

Questions for farmworkers: permanent workers

1. How long have you been a farm-workers, specifically for sugar cane farms?
2. Where did you work before this? (follow up)
3. What has your experience been as a farmworker?
4. How is it being a farmworker in the early 2000s after fast track land reform and being a farmworker from 2010 till now in 2018?
5. What perks or advantages come with being a permanent worker for you and your family if you have one?
6. What are the challenges or disadvantages you have faced as a farmworker?
7. How are the wages you get and are they consistent and how are the general working conditions?
8. How is your working relationship with the farm owner?
9. Who do you report to when you encounter problems on the farm? (any committee or organisation)
10. What do you see from other farms that you think is good or bad?

Appendix D

Questions for farmworkers: temporary workers

1. How long have you been a temporary farmworker for sugar cane farms?
2. What has been your experience as temporary farmworker?
3. How is it being a permanent farmworker in the early 2000s after fast track land reform and being a farmworker from 2010 till now in 2018?
4. What perks or advantages come with being a temporary worker for you and your family if you have one?
5. What are the challenges or disadvantages you have faced as a temporary farmworker?
6. How are the wages you get and are they consistent and how are the general working conditions?
7. Does the farmer provide you with accommodation during the time you are working for him?
8. How is your working relationship with the farm owner?

Appendix E

Questions for Supervisors/ Foremen

1. When did you start working on this farm or as a farmworker?
2. Did you start off as a supervisor or a farmworker?
3. How has your experience as a supervisor been in comparison to being a farm worker?
4. What are the challenges and advantages of being a supervisor?
5. How is your relationship with the farmer owners?
6. How are the wages you get and are they consistent and how are the general working conditions?