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# Going nowhere fast? Changed working conditions on Western Cape fruit and wine farms

A state of knowledge review

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## PLAAS Working Paper 41: Going nowhere fast? Changed working conditions on Western Cape fruit and wine farms: A state of knowledge review

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## ABSTRACT

This state of the knowledge review sets out to identify the main research themes and findings in the literature on labour relations and conditions on Western Cape fruit farms over the past 20 years. The paper also compares if and how farmworker livelihoods have changed since the heyday of Apartheid, and the role of the state in these changes. While farmworkers enjoy vastly more legal protection than in the past, most may in fact be worse off economically. This lack of improvement can be attributed to the state's contradictory policy approach to the sector: while it extended protection to farmworkers post-1994, it withdrew support from producers, especially regulatory support that previously forced them to bargain collectively with international retailers. Since 1994, international retailers have increasingly consolidated and formed buyer monopolies, so producers now face extremely powerful bargaining partners as individuals and have therefore become price takers. To protect their profit margins, producers have externalised and casualised their labour forces, and moved workers off-farm. The research points to the limited power of the state to regulate employer-employee relations that are embedded in global value chains, and to the problematic of relying on a narrowly rights-based approach to remedy working conditions. While aiming to regulate employer-employee relations within its national jurisdiction, the state has failed to insulate such relations from the power wielded in the global fruit value chain that shapes relations right into the farmyard. Such power relations not only shape the commercial relations between international retailers and local producers, but also between local producers and their workers. The review also highlights the importance of analysing producer agency in contesting or circumventing state policy decisions, which ultimately affect workers' livelihoods. Yet, the paper points out that worker and producer responses to the impacts on them have been underexplored.

**Keywords:** farmworkers; fruit producers; international retailers; labour policy; Western Cape

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## ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
BCEA	Basic Conditions of Employment Act
BFAP	Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy
COSATU	Congress of Trade Unions of South Africa
CSSR	Centre for Social Science Research
DFID	Department for International Development
DPRU	Development Policy Research Unit
DRDLR	Department of Rural Development and Land Reform
EEC	European Economic Community
ESTA	Extension of Security and Tenure Act
ETI	Ethical Trading Initiative
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GPN	Global Production Network
GVC	Global Value Chain
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
HTA	Hex River Table Grape Association
ILO	International Labour Organization
LAPC	Land and Agricultural Policy Centre
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LRA	Labour Relations Act
NDA	National Development Agency
OECD	Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development
QLFS	Quarterly Labour Force Survey
SAAU	South African Agricultural Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAHO	South African History Online
SAIRR	South African Institute of Race Relations
SALDRU	Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit
SATI	South African Table Grape Industry
SAWIS	South African Wine Industry and Information Systems
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
TCAs	Traditional Communal Areas
UCT	University of Cape Town
UIF	Unemployment Insurance Fund
WW2	World War 2

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	II
ABSTRACT .....	II
ACRONYMS .....	III
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
2. THE WESTERN CAPE FRUIT INDUSTRY 40 YEARS AGO .....	3
3. THE WESTERN CAPE FRUIT INDUSTRY TODAY .....	12
4. CONCLUSION .....	33
5. THE GAPS .....	36
REFERENCES.....	39

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Farm work – which in the Cape originates in slavery – has been mired in controversy. Up until 1994 farmworkers have been some of the lowest paid workers in South Africa, trapped in paternalist labour relations, isolated, unorganised, and their plight overlooked – first by the Apartheid state, and then, as for instance claimed by Hall and Du Toit (2014), also by the ANC government. More recently, after the 2012 farmworker protest that broke out in De Doorns, the spotlight has again turned to farmworkers' lives and working conditions. While the dust in Stofland has largely settled, a positive consequence of this renewed focus on farmworkers and their plight is that more energy is being channelled into researching issues affecting farmworkers. This renewed focus is a welcome change, given that for some time farmworkers were not high on the research agenda. Yet, over the last 20 years, some researchers have kept their finger on the pulse of farmworker labour relations and have published seminal papers on farmworkers' living and working conditions. These seminal papers help us gauge which issues are new, which are perennial, and which are the main factors that impact on farmworkers conditions.

This paper aims to (1) identify the main themes and findings of research conducted in this field over the past 20 years; (2) identify consensus positions and differences in opinions across the research; and (3) identify possibly gaps in the research, due to new developments or lack of historical research in the field. A central focus of the paper is to unpack how both private and public regulation of agricultural value chains have influenced farmworkers' living and working conditions, as well as their structural power.

### Scope

Due to time and space constraints, not all papers written on the topic in the last 20 years have been surveyed. A concerted effort however has been made to review seminal papers in the Western Cape's fruit and wine sector. For the sake of completeness, some seminal papers that do not fall neatly within the scope have been included.

A fairly narrow scope was chosen because farming in South Africa is diverse, so linking specific outcomes to variables is much more difficult if a wide range of variables are factored in. Such variables would typically include different products, labour intensity, market focus, and regions. But, moreover, the Western Cape has been exceptional since farmers in the province have historically struggled more than those in other provinces, to secure labour.

Although the review mainly focuses on changing labour relations in the agricultural industry over the past 20 years, the last 20 years are also compared to a much earlier period: that of the mid-1970s – the so-called heyday of Apartheid. This comparison is possible due to a series of papers produced for a 1976 conference on farm labour hosted by the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) at the University of Cape Town. This series of papers discuss working conditions on fruit farms in the Boland (Elgin, De Doorns and Citrusdal) and serve as an important benchmark for measuring if and how farmworkers' livelihoods have changed over time. The comparison also allows for theorisation on what factors – especially regulatory changes – have contributed most to the changes in farmworkers' lives.

### Theoretical approach

The concept of value chain analysis, used to explain how development happens in the age of globalisation, emphasises the ability of lead firms in global value chains (GVCs) to direct the course of development (or underdevelopment). This analytical approach was only developed in the late 1990s. Gereffi (2014: 12, citing Gereffi&Fernandez-Stark 2011), a main proponent of this approach, describes global value chain analysis as follows:

*[It] focuses on globally expanding supply chains and how value is created and captured therein. By analysing the full range of activities that firms and workers perform to bring a specific product from its conception to its end use and beyond, the GVC approach provides a holistic view of global industries from two contrasting vantage points: top-down and bottom-up. The key concept for the top-down view is the 'governance' of GVCs, which focuses mainly on lead firms and the organisation of local industries; the main concept for the bottom-up perspective is 'upgrading', which focuses on the strategies used by countries, regions and other economic stakeholders to maintain or improve their positions in the global economy.*

In other words the GVC approach allows researchers to (1) identify the main agents in the chain; (2) reveal which agents in the chain are the main power brokers; and (3) show by which processes and mechanisms such agents wield power. Initially Gereffi (2014) identified two seats of power within value chains: one driven by buyers in what he called as “buyer-driven chains”; the other by producers in what has become known as “producer-driven chains”. However, the original concept has since been revised as it was ‘too broad to capture the full complexity of GVC governance structures’ (Gereffi 2014: 13). For the purpose of this analysis however, this distinction is useful, as will be explained later.

Gereffi (2014) has argued further that the governance concept is useful to capture current changes in the global economy, including:

- the emergence of the Washington Consensus;
- a growing consumer base in the Global South lead to a shift in the end markets of developing countries;
- geographic consolidation and value chain concentration in the global supply base in some cases, shifted bargaining power from lead firms in GVCs to large suppliers in developing economies; and
- a growing shortage of some raw materials made lead firms more aware of the vulnerability of their supply chains and led to them entering strategic collaborations with suppliers.

Although Gereffi (2014: 29) includes the public sphere in the description of ‘multiple governance structures ... that link different components of the system together’, he treats the state as one actor under the rubric of ‘multiple governance structures’.

Neilson et al. (2014) comment that explicit theorisation of the state’s role has been somewhat lacking in the literature on GVCs and Global Production Networks (GPNs). They argue that state action – as much as inaction – creates the enabling or disabling conditions that shape whether and how firms, regions and nations are able to engage with global markets and extract benefits from such engagements. They argue that global economic change is increasingly demanding greater prominence for the state’s role in creating the context in which value chains function and the extent to which the state actively shapes the structure of these chains.

Some of the reviewed papers, written after the year 2000, use value chain analysis to describe the consequences of the insertion of South African agriculture into global value chains. Earlier papers tend to focus more on power relations between workers and farmers (and sometimes how the state influences such power dynamics) to describe development and underdevelopment in the sector. Most earlier papers are however silent on whether and how South African producers fit into global value chains and/or the international trade environments in which they operate. Yet, given the export-oriented focus of fruit industry, the value chain perspective is critical.

This paper retrospectively applies value chain analysis to illustrate how the insertion of the Western Cape fruit and wine industry into global value chains has affected the development of farmworkers. It also responds to Neilson et al.’s (2014) call to explicitly foreground the role of the South African state in global horticultural value chain governance.



Therefore, the 1976 papers offer a glimpse into a time when South African agriculture, although already integrated into global value chains, was far less tightly integrated than today. In 1976 South African fruit and wine value chains could still be described as buyer-driven; the international retail environment was still largely unconsolidated, and the sector was still heavily state-supported.

Of the 1976 papers, Morris's paper is highlighted as he discusses the interaction between the key stakeholders and the state in shaping agricultural policy. Morris (1976) – who would later become a key proponent of value chain analysis – offers an extremely useful analysis of how Apartheid ideologies acted in a precise and definite way to ensure that major obstacles to the interests of agricultural capital in regard to labour on farms were either removed or regulated. However, by looking back to an even earlier period, before agriculture could count on such state support, Morris (1976) contends that getting that level of state support was far from a *fait accompli*, but resulted from 'struggles and conflict within and over the state that characterised the "current moments" of [that] particular society'.

Later papers, especially those published from 1994 to 2003, and in particular Williams et al. (1998), describe Morris's 'struggles and conflict within and over the state' that again leads to a particular 'current moment'. However, the more recent papers describe the effect of power transitions in agriculture after democratisation in 1994. Comparing 1976 and the period from 1994 to 2015 therefore also allows for an analysis of how the struggles for the "heart" of the state have shaped South African agriculture, especially the fate of farmworkers over the past 20 years.

The next section provides a historical review of farm work regulation – drawing largely on Morris (1976) – before honing in on the structure of the Western Cape fruit farm labour force in 1976, and the factors that led to farmers' shaping their labour forces in a certain way, as discussed by Levy (1976), Graaff (1976) and Theron (1976). Thereafter, section 3 provides an overview of the main regulatory changes in the agricultural sector in the first ten years after democratisation. Section 4 then discusses the broad themes found in labour-focussed agricultural studies over the last 20 years.

## 2. THE WESTERN CAPE FRUIT INDUSTRY 40 YEARS AGO

### A protective bulwark provided by the state

The year 1976 was a watershed for South African politics, but also for the economy, which would eventually also affect agriculture. After the 1976 student uprising, international pressure on the Apartheid state increased steadily, culminating in sanctions against South Africa in the 1980s. At the same time, dramatic hikes in the oil price led to a series of recessions: first in 1976, and another following in the next decade (Byrnes 1996). Economic growth therefore slowed in the late 1970s and entered the doldrums in the 1980s. Hanival and Maia (undated) point out that after 1976 gross domestic product and gross fixed capital formation began to slide down a slippery slope which only recovered somewhat by 2002.

However, in the decade before 1976, the South African economy was booming due to 'inwardly-focused policies aimed at industrialisation and import substitution', which protected South African companies from international competition (Hanival&Maia, undated). Given that agricultural producers were a key National Party constituent, the state implemented various protective measures to aid the sector. But even well before the Apartheid state's rise to power, laws were promulgated to support the sector, such as:

- The Land Bank of South Africa, founded in 1912, provided subsidised financial services and credit to white farmers. The Agricultural Credit Board, an agency in the Department of Agriculture, also gave credit to farmers who did not qualify to borrow from the Land Bank

(Vink&Van Rooyen 2009). The Marketing Act 26 of 1937 allowed for the creation of state-controlled marketing boards for most agricultural commodities. Morris (1976) argues that, after the Great Depression of 1933, farmers' financial situation only stabilized once the Marketing Act was promulgated. Marketing boards controlled the movement of produce and were in charge of price setting, monitoring quality standards, and selling and supplying agricultural products. Significantly, the boards controlled sales of almost all exported agricultural produce. The marketing boards were designed to protect farmers from the vicissitudes of an uncertain climate, volatile prices, and the inability of foreign and local markets to absorb their output (Williams et al, 1998: 70). Boards could use their monopoly power to keep prices high, a system that became known as the single channel market system.<sup>1</sup> Eventually 22 control schemes were established, managing four-fifths of the gross value of agricultural production (Williams et al, 1998, citing the Kassier Committee 1992; Kirsten&Van Zyl 1992). The Cooperative Societies Amendment Act (1925) allowed a network of primary producer cooperatives to be established. As cooperatives bought inputs collectively, they negotiated cheaper prices and provided services such as bulk grain storage and transport of produce to market. They also monitored quality, regulated planting quotas, and got rid of surpluses through processing (as in the case of wine and milk). The cooperative system was integrated into the work of the control boards and provided an important channel for other institutional support. Williams et al (1998: 71) point out that by eliminating competition over prices and over transport costs, marketing boards contributed to the expansion of co-operative bulking, storing and millings, and encouraged concentration among processing, wholesale, and retail markets. Cooperatives were also important financial intermediaries: the Land Bank used cooperatives as agents to provide short- and medium-term credit to commercial farmers at subsidised interest rates (Bayley 2000, cited in Greenberg 2010; Vink&Van Rooyen 2009). Government also channelled disaster assistance through cooperatives, usually in the form of debt consolidation (Ortmann&King, 2007).

Consecutive governments also created extensive measures to control the movement of Africans so as to ensure cheap labour for producers. Levy (1976) notes that labour shortages among Cape farmers were a problem from the early days of the Cape. Initially, Dutch colonisers met the demand with slave labour. Seven years after the British became the new colonisers and abolished slavery in 1834, they passed the first version of the Masters and Servants Act 15 of 1856 which eventually went down in history books as 'draconian', as it bound workers to their employers. The last Masters and Servants Act was only abolished in 1974. Commenting on the various versions of the Masters and Servants Act, Le Roux (2002: 6) notes that:

*[t]echnically these laws were racially neutral. However, since the masters were white and the servants not, it buttressed racial and class divisions and replaced the whip of the slave driver with penal sanctions, securing 'the employee's subordination as an incident of the contract of employment'.*

However restrictive these laws might have been, they seemingly did not prevent farmworkers from exiting agriculture in search of better job opportunities. Apart from dire working and living conditions on farms, workers were pulled north by the discovery of gold, which profoundly changed the South African economy from one driven primarily by agriculture, to one driven by mining. The discovery of the gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886 began to challenge agriculture's labour market dominance, as mining provided better paid work. Morris (1976) argues that competition for labour between the agriculture and mining sector was a major impetus for enacting laws to control blacks. The most notorious of such laws were the Natives Land Act 27 of 1913 and the Natives Trust and Land Act 18 of 1936.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For instance, Mather&Greenberg (2003) note that, in overseas markets, the Citrus Exchange controlled more than half of the southern hemisphere's citrus, putting it in a dominant position during citrus season, even against the growing power of multiple retailers in Britain and Europe. By the late 1980s, the Citrus Exchange had established a system of 'panelists' – large British importers who supplied retailers and wholesale markets – with a view to controlling fruit volumes and prices.

<sup>2</sup> The Natives Land Act was passed to allocate only about 7% of arable land to black people and leave the more fertile land for whites. The law created reserves for black people and prohibited the sale of territory in white areas to black people and

Apart from the better paid mine work, workers migrated from rural areas to cities because the Great Depression and World War 2 put pressure on farmers' margins. These events stimulated the mining and manufacturing industries, and devalued the currencies of countries which abandoned the Gold Standard. South Africa did not initially drop the Gold Standard, so farmers were hard hit when the devaluation of foreign currencies led to lower prices. The 1930s price crisis threw farmers into a 'whirlpool of increasing costs, decreasing prices and increasing debts [that] forced farmers to further squeeze their labour tenants' (Morris 1976: 4). As a result, labour tenants increasingly migrated to urban areas, leading to agricultural labour shortages.

When South Africa finally abandoned the Gold Standard in 1932, higher gold prices sparked economic expansion and created a huge demand for mining and industrial labour. After WW2 broke out – stimulating many national economies – the demand for labour rose further, and black labour increasingly migrated first to the mines, then to factories, to benefit from better job opportunities. In urban areas, the need for labour was so great that the Smuts-government relaxed influx control in and considered revising the pass control system in 1942 (Cameron&Spies 1986; SAHO 2013b).

In the 1930s and 1940s African farmworker migration to towns subtly, but critically, shifted (Morris 1976). Most town labour was previously drawn from the Reserves, but by 1939, farms had become what the Reserves used to be – sources of cheap labour (SAIRR 1939, cited in Morris 1976). As a result, the farm labour shortage reached crisis proportions during and immediately after WW2 (Morris, 1976: 9). Already in 1941, Parliament had noted that the 'shortage of farm labour is undoubtedly the greatest problem the farmer has to contend with at the moment' (Labuschagne (Bethal) Col. 5849,3/4/41, cited in Morris 1976: 9). Agricultural congress after congress drew attention to the shortage. Farmers accused the Smuts-government of failing to intervene in the migration of workers to towns and cities (which benefited industrial capital), and not taking into account whether this labour flow came from capitalist agriculture or from the Reserves. They actively lobbied the state to put measures in place to prevent migration from farms.

The struggle for the heart of the state was particularly strong at this juncture. In 1942, farmers gave a special committee of the South African Agricultural Union (SAAU) unanimous support to ask government to (1) 'apply Chapter IV of the Native Trust and Land Act to all provinces immediately'; (2) 'to exercise control over unemployed Natives in locations'; and (3) to 'revise the recruitment of Native labour for mines and for all public works ... (so) that these bodies will obtain their labour mainly from sources outside the Union' (cited in Morris, 1976: 11) There was also a general demand that pass laws and the Urban Areas Acts be more rigorously enforced (Morris 1976: 11).

The Smuts-government resisted making such changes, inter alia to prevent an uprising of the black populace. Instead, it proposed that farmers pay higher wages to retain farmworkers, a suggestion that farmers scoffed at, pleading hardship. Only once the Verwoerd government – which drew heavily on the farmer community for support – came to power were the bulk of the SAAU's suggestions implemented. In 1951, referring to two bills being debated in Parliament at the time – the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act 52 of 1951 and the Native Laws Amendment Act 54 of 1952 – Verwoerd 'publically summarised his intentions and the [SAAU's] proposed measures to deal with the farm labour shortage' (Morris 1976: 34–35). These Acts were the most important pieces of legislation 'in the post-war era and laid the basis of all state intervention to control the "distribution of labour" between town and country from 1952 until 1971' (ibid). Verwoerd also explicitly acknowledged that the move was a legislative attempt to put into effect the long-term 'native policy' – originally formulated in the SAAU's 1944 memorandum (Morris 1976: 35).

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vice versa. In effect, over 80% of land went to white people, who made up less than 20% of the population. The Act stipulated that black people could only live outside the reserves if they could prove that they were employed. Black people maintained that the law aimed to meet white farmers' demands more agricultural land and force black people to work as labourers (South African History Online 2013a). The Natives Trust and Land Act aimed to increase the land set aside for reserves from 7.3% to almost 13%, but this goal was seemingly never achieved (Lapping 1986: 204).

Because Verwoerd finally implemented the legislation that farmers had long clamoured for, by the late 1950s farmer journals and congresses stopped being ‘predominantly concerned with the farm labour shortage’ (Morris 1976: 42). Still, the National Party continued to pass legislation to control movement of farmworkers’ movement. For example, the Black Labour Act 67 of 1964 ensured that once a person was categorised as a farm labourer, they could only be re-categorised with great difficulty to enter an urban area to seek work (Le Roux 2002: 7).

In short, politically and economically from the late 1950s until 1976, South African farmers were in the best position ever as far as state support was concerned. Not only did the state pass a host of supportive legislation to protect the direct interests of agriculture, it also implemented repressive laws to ensure a cheap supply of labour. While the strong Rand at the time would have meant that export prices were fairly low, the upside of a strong Rand was that it reduced the cost of (mostly imported) production inputs.

Moreover, farmers who exported at the time were integrated in a producer-driven value chain: export sales were controlled by marketing boards that consolidated the bargaining power of individual farmers and enabled them to negotiate higher prices with overseas buyers. At that stage the international retail environment was still largely unconsolidated with the result that most sales still took place at municipal markets, such as Covent Garden in London. Relatively speaking, producers were therefore in the proverbial pound seat in the market place.

### Relative labour shortage on Western Cape fruit farms in the 1970s

While Western Cape farmers benefited from most of the state’s legislative support measures, in one respect legislation may have disadvantaged them. Levy (1976) notes that for Western Cape farmers – especially those growing labour-intensive crops – influx control presented a real hurdle not only to *cheap* labour, but sometimes to labour per se. He notes that as early as the 1800s Western Cape farmers used migrant labour from other parts of South Africa to supplement existing labour. In the 1870s, government brought about 4 000 Africans to the Cape from the eastern frontier; they were ‘rapidly absorbed within a thirty mile radius of Cape Town’ (Levy, 1976: 10). In subsequent years, workers were recruited from the Transkei, Mozambique and the then South West Africa.

By the 1970s, the control system and official quotas aimed at regulating the African population made it increasingly difficult for Western Cape farmers to find enough labour (Graaff 1976: 8). Only so-called “Section 10” Africans were allowed to stay in the Western Cape (Levy 1976: 11).<sup>3</sup> Other Africans had to go back from whence they came once their employment contract expired. Given the difficulty of securing migrant African workers, Theron (1976), Levy (1976) and Graaff (1976) reported in their case studies that farmers mostly used Coloured workers. In Elgin and De Doorns, at least 65% of farmworkers were Coloured, while in Citrusdal only a handful were Coloured.

Mechanisation of South African agriculture, which started in the 1960s and picked up pace in the 1970s, reduced labour demand in industries that could easily be mechanised (such as grain farming) (Atkinson 2007; Antrobus 1976), but mechanisation had little impact on fresh fruit farming, which cannot easily be mechanised due to the perishability of fruit.

Increased urbanisation and peri-urbanisation of Coloured workers in search of higher wages and less harsh working conditions also drove the demand for agricultural labour in the Western Cape (Levy 1976; Thomas 1976; Graaff 1976). Moreover, two “supply shocks” in the Boland further

<sup>3</sup> The Blacks (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act 25 of 1945 was amended to specify that all black men and women over the age of sixteen were to carry passes and that no black person could stay in urban areas longer than seventy-two hours unless they had permission to do so. In terms of Section 10, governing who could legally stay in urban areas, those entitled to stay were: (1) only those black people born in urban areas, who had lived there continuously since their birth; (2) those who had been continuously employed for ten years; or (3) those in continuous residence in urban areas for fifteen years (Dugard 1978; Horrell 1978, cited in O’Malley (undated)).

reduced the available pool of farm labour in the 1970s. The first shock was the prison closure in the De Doorns area (an important source of labour for farmers), due to foreign pressure against the use of prison labour (Levy 1976; Graaff 1976).<sup>4</sup> The second shock was an earthquake in 1969, which shook several Boland towns – especially Ceres, and resulted in a building boom which, due to higher wages on offer, attracted labour from farms (Levy 1976). The shocks led to increased reserve wages for Coloured workers in the Elgin area (Levy 1976). Coloured workers were reluctant to accept permanent jobs on farms unless housing was “adequate” and ‘seasonal male “Coloured” labour was apparently prohibitively expensive’ (Levy 1976: 31; 42). By 1973, about 28% of the farmers that Levy surveyed in the Elgin area complained that they struggled to find enough permanent workers.

A change in the demography of female pack house workers created a further labour shortage. Initially, pack house work required skilled and better trained workers, so pack house workers were quite well-paid. Before WW2, white women commonly worked in Western Cape pack houses. However, after the war, the reserve wage of white women increased due to an expanding service sector; white women therefore increasingly took service jobs in the cities and bigger towns. As the reserve wages of remaining white pack house workers rose, pack house owners developed new packing methods, thus requiring less skilled workers. They began to train unskilled Coloured women to work in pack houses and replace white women (Levy 1976). While this strategy drove down packing costs, it created a temporary shortage of Coloured (women) workers to harvest apples, as in the picking season, the pack houses absorbed those workers. However, women were historically not used to pick apples in the area as the work was considered “too strenuous” for them. Given the higher reserve wages of Coloured men and the fact that Coloured women were employed in pack houses, farmers began to employ African migrants from the Transkei to pick apples (Levy 1976).

## Farmer strategies to secure permanent labour

To secure and retain labour, farmers tied housing to employment. In Citrusdal, almost all permanent workers lived on the farm; in De Doorns almost 85% of permanent workers lived on the farm; and in Elgin 53% of permanent workers lived on the farm (Levy, 1976:11; Graaff, 1976; Theron, 1976). As well as tying employment to housing, farmers tied employees down by granting loans to workers (to enable them to buy food from farm shops which put them in a continuous cycle of indebtedness to farmers), and by using in-kind payments (such as providing weekly rations) that lowered workers’ monetary wage and deprived them of choice about how they wanted to spend their wages (Theron 1976). However, the most notorious measure was the “dop” system, by which farmworkers received up nine tots of alcohol a day, leading to psychologically and physically enslavement (Theron 1976; Graaff 1976).

The combination of financial dependence, alcoholic dependence and isolation from towns and other communities severely affected farmworker agency. Since social interactions with fellow workers were confined to walking distances, workers knew very little about conditions on other farms (Theron 1976). Not surprisingly, none of the three authors mentioned any instances of collective organisation or bargaining by farmworkers at the time.

## Using dependents as a cheap source of flexible labour

The strategy of tying housing to employment not only ensured the services of permanent workers, but also secured the labour of their dependents, who became a cheap, readily available and flexible source of labour. Through the advantage of such family labour, a farmer was ‘able to minimise his labour costs by only employing people for specific functions without being impelled to contract on the market – with all the costs involved, both in the dissemination of information and the provision of transport for those employed – each time he require[d] this

<sup>4</sup> However, Theron (1976) found that farmers in the Vredendal area were still using prison labour.

labour' (Levy 1976: 31). In most South African farms the unit of employment has been the worker's family and not the individual worker themselves (Kritzinger et al. 2004). Thus women farmworkers historically accessed employment and on-farm housing via a male partner and/or male family member. However, according to the 1976-authors, the issue at the time was not that women did not have access to employment, but rather that they and their children *were forced into employment* as part of the deal their husbands or fathers entered with the farmer. On the other hand, since permanent workers' had low wages, household units probably welcomed the opportunity to supplement household income through dependents.

The family of permanent workers could only work elsewhere (mostly on adjacent farms) with the permission of their partner or father's employer (Theron 1976; Levy 1976; Graaff 1976; Antrobus 1976). In Levy's De Doorns sample, 13 of the 18 farmers confirmed that permanent workers' dependents who lived on the farm were obliged to work on the farm when required to do so; indeed, 'four farmers noted that an important criterion in their hiring of permanent workers is the number of potentially productive dependents in the workers' family' (Levy, 1976:32). But even if women were free to work where they wanted, Theron (1976: 6) notes that they could only take on work within walking distance of the farm.

At the time, child labour was common, especially during school holidays; during the thinning season in De Doorns, 51% of off-farm seasonal workers were schoolchildren (Levy 1976). Four De Doorns farmers used schoolteachers to supervise children, often in teams organised by the teachers themselves (Levy 1976). Farmers competed for the services of teachers, who were therefore highly paid to supervise children (Levy, 1976). Given the lack of high schools for Coloured and African children it was common for children to start working on farms once they had finished primary school, i.e. from the age of thirteen onwards (Theron 1976). Many schools only went up to Grade 6 and no school transport was available for farm children wishing to attend school in town. A lack of educational opportunities for Coloureds and Africans in the Western Cape primed them for low wage work (Graaff 1976; Theron, 1976 Antrobus 1976).<sup>5</sup>

On-farm labour was the primary source of temporary labour, except during peak seasons when most workers were off-farm women and children in De Doorns and migrant labour in Elgin (see *Table 1*). In both Elgin and Hex River Valley, on-farm temporary women were employed for about 8.5 months a year as they also helped with pruning in the off-season (Levy 1976). On Citrusdal farms, women and children mostly only worked in the four month harvesting season.

**Table 1: Sources of seasonal workers in Citrusdal, Elgin and the Hexriver Valley in 1976**

Area	Types of work		
	Pre-thinning	Thinning	Picking and Packing
Citrusdal (citrus)	N.A.	N.A.	Peak demand (4 months): On-farm women and children
Elgin (apples)	N.A.	On-farm women: 68% Off-farm women: 22% Short-term migrants: 10%	Peak demand (more than 3 months): African migrants on short-term: 95% Women did all the packing: On-farm women: 71% Off-farm women: 29%
De Doorns (table grapes)	On-farm women: 90%	Peak demand (6 weeks): • Off-farmworkers recruited from Worcester, De Doorns, Touws River and neighbouring farms: 66% (51% schoolchildren) • On-farm women and children: 34% (16% children)	On-farmworkers (90% of packing workforce) Women from surrounding towns: 10%

Sources: Levy 1976; Theron 1976.

<sup>5</sup> Farm schools for Coloured children in the Western Cape were only built from the 1960s. By the 1970s, the number and quality of schools for African and Coloured children in the Western Cape were still deeply inadequate. Schools often had to operate double shifts to accommodate all pupils. The situation was worse for African school children in the Western Cape, because in terms of official policy, such children and their parents were not supposed to settle in the Western Cape (Graaff 1976).

## Female work

Pack house work provided a step-up for Coloured women as the work was not only less strenuous than orchard work, but also better paid. In Elgin 12 of the 15 farms in Levy's sample packed their own fruit, all using on-farm women. The remainder consisted of women sourced from nearby, surrounding areas, but also from areas further away. The recruitment of such off-farm pack house workers by farmers in the Elgin area was not very sophisticated: only three farmers in Levy's (1976) sample established contacts in the area to act as their recruiting agents. Most drove into the local township and collected women who wanted to work. This suggests that while some farmers might have experienced a shortage of male, permanent labour, there was evidently no shortage of temporary female labour in the area. Secondly, the ease with which farmers obtained temporary (female) labour, seems to suggest that a significant off-farm community of available workers already existed in the Elgin area by 1976.

The two cooperative pack houses seemingly had a more structured recruitment drive, given that Elgin Fruit Packers Cooperative and Krom River Pack House respectively employed 400 and 300 women in the height of the season. Both operated hostels where some women resided for the duration of the packing season (about 120 women were housed in hostels by Krom River pack house) (Levy 1976). Off-season, only women from nearby – mostly the wives of permanent men – were employed in the pack houses of local co-operatives, which had cold storage facilities that extended the season and created a longer packing period (Levy 1976).

## Use of migrant labour in 1976

### Motivation for migrant workers

While there might have been a relative shortage of permanent (male) labour in the Elgin and Du Doorns areas, the real shortage was not of labour per se, but of *cheap full-time labour*. As Coloured men's reserve wages increased, farmers optimised the use of the labour of on-farm dependents, but increasingly sourced (cheaper) African migrants to replace Coloured male permanent workers. Hence, despite influx control measures, migration from the Transkei to Western Cape farms continued (often under the official radar) as the relatively lower total labour costs of African labour encouraged farmers to substitute Coloured workers with African migrants (Levy 1976). Farmers had to choose between employing mainly African migrant (at lower wages and with little additional housing costs) or Coloured workers and their dependents (with a possibly higher wage bill and the necessity to provide adequate family housing) (Levy 1976). Especially in Elgin, family house-provision was increasingly a prerequisite for obtaining permanent Coloured labour. This choice '... helps us to understand the economic rationale for a motion passed at the annual conference of the Boland Agricultural Union requesting that dependents of African migrants be permitted to accompany their husbands' (Levy, 1976: 17).

In places like Elgin and De Doorns, the use of African migrants was fairly high – probably due to labour-intensive farming being near urban and peri-urban areas. Elgin was quite close to the burgeoning metropolis of Cape Town, while the Hex River Valley was close to Worcester, which had been recently demarcated as a new growth node. Unlike African workers, Coloured workers were not restricted by pass laws, so Coloured farmworkers living near peri-urban and metropolitan areas would have found it easier than those in more isolated areas like Citrusdal to escape farm work and find better paid work in towns and cities. Similarly, farming areas close to peri-urban or urban areas (such as Elgin and Worcester) would have been more attractive to African migrants as such areas could be a springboard on their way to higher paid city jobs. In contrast, the use of migrant workers in Citrusdal was quite rare as the area was (1) far from urban or peri-urban areas and (2) labour demand was only high in the four month of citrus picking season. On-farm women and children did most of the picking, and only about a quarter of farms sampled by Theron (1976) employed a "handful" of workers from Transkei for 11 months of the year.

In Elgin, market conditions also drove farmers to source cheaper, migrant labour. Improved cold storage facilities enabled European apple farmers to store apples for longer and supply the European market in the off-season (the window period in which Southern hemisphere apples were historically sold on the European market). European producers also enjoyed tariff protection from imported apples. The combination of tariff protections and cold storage facilities in Europe, which flooded the market, drove prices down. At the same time, the European Economic Community's (EEC) protective measures and high subsidy levels to European producers enabled them to absorb lower prices. To cope with lower apple prices, South African farmers cut their labour costs and replaced more expensive male Coloured workers with African migrant workers (Levy 1976).

### Prevalence of migrant work

At the time, migrant labour was especially prevalent in Elgin, where apple picking was seen as too strenuous for women and children. Transkei migrants made up almost 95% of Elgin's seasonal picking force. Migrant workers were employed on contract for three months to a year, but most (62%) were employed on contract for between eight and ten months. Such migrants stayed on-farm for the duration of their contract (Levy 1976), so while migrants were ostensibly hired only for the three month picking season, they ended up staying much longer. At Elgin Fruit Packers Cooperative almost half of workers were migrant labour from the Transkei, with 90% of them employed on six month contracts – much longer than the three-month-long harvesting season.

In Elgin and De Doorns and, to a lesser extent, Citrusdal, several African workers permanently lived and worked on farms in terms of Section 10 of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act 21 of 1923. From the 1976 papers, it is unclear what percentage of permanent workers were African. Apart from the Section 10 Africans, De Doorns table grape farmers also used “permanent” migrants from Transkei who could not get a Section 10 permit (Levy 1976). In De Doorns, these “permanent migrants” made up 14% of permanent workers in Levy's (1976) De Doorns sample. Such migrants were employed on nine- to twelve-month contracts, so Levy (1976) treated them as permanent workers.

### Sourcing migrant labour

To source migrant labour, one Elgin farmer in Levy's (1976) sample used a Transkei agent who recruited labour as a side-line. Other Elgin farmers in his sample sourced workers directly, by sending trucks to the Transkei to fetch workers (Levy 1976). Sometimes farmers would even go themselves to recruit workers; in other cases farmers would send foremen or “boss-boys” to recruit workers. Some Transkei workers apparently also returned to Elgin on their own steam, showing that working relationships with some workers must have been well-established at the time. In De Doorns, the Hex Valley Boeregroep – already established in 1966 to recruit migrant workers for its 250 member farms – recruited about 2 000–2 500 Transkei migrants a year by 1976 (Levy 1976).

### Struggle to get migrant labour

Apart from influx control, which made it difficult for Western Cape farmers to secure African labour, the mining sector – which had an upsurge at the time due to increased gold prices – continued to compete with the agricultural sector for labour.<sup>6</sup> Given the (low) wages paid to migrants, the labour supply in the Transkei seemed to be drying up (Levy 1976: 12). Seven of the nine Elgin farmers in Levy's (1976) sample who used migrant labour struggled to get enough migrant labour. Also the Hex Valley Boeregroep reported difficulties recruiting Transkei workers. Levy (1976: 13) noted that ‘[a]ccording to a reliable source, the bulk of the workers obtained by the Boeregroep [were] youths and old men, the only people prepared to accept agricultural employment’. Hence, apart from struggling to source enough Coloured workers willing to work for the low wages on offer, farmers also began to find it difficult to get sufficient African migrant labourers.

<sup>6</sup> In the 1970s, a decision was taken to float the gold price, which led to high prices for gold and other export commodities.



The literature does not discuss whether and how farmers' use of migrant labour changed once influx controls were abolished in the 1980s, allowing Transkei's migrant workers to settle, with their families, in local Boland towns. The change might, however, have led to an influx of migrants and an oversupply of workers at the same time as South African agriculture began to deregulate and the South African economy was put under strain due to sanctions and a slowing economy. Hence, the demographic shift in the agricultural labour market after influx controls were abolished in 1986 must ironically have significantly weakened the structural position of the existing pool of agricultural workers on Boland farms. Conversely, the new influx would have been a godsend to farmers, who would have been under increasing economic pressure due to economic sanctions, a weakening economy, and the gradual withdrawal of state agricultural subsidies.

## Working conditions in 1976

Given that labour legislation did not apply to agriculture at the time, the three 1976 papers do not discuss compliance with legislation. Levy (1976: 44) commented on the 'rapidly improving living and working conditions, for families based on farms [in the Hex River Valley and Elgin] (noticeably in Elgin)'. Yet, since his paper focused on farmers' employment strategies and not on farmworkers' working conditions, he gave little evidence of such improved working conditions. Nevertheless, Levy (1976: 44) argued that 'with an ever-increasing scarcity of migrant workers there may well be a renewed attempt to attract Coloured workers back to farms, and reduce, relatively, the number of Africans contracted'. In 1976, farmers already competed greatly on wages to attract off-farmworkers in the thinning season (Levy 1976).

Graaff (1976: 4) offered a more ambivalent picture of farm working conditions in De Doorns. On the one hand, 'far too few farmers give their staff any holiday at all', while 'some farms in the valley ... worked seven days a week'; with about 50% of farms still having the dop system, and farmworkers still finding themselves in a "socio-economic morass". On the other hand, Graaff (1976) 'is surprised at the number of workers driving cars', that the general standard of housing had improved "tremendously", but also that wages were rising. De Doorns farmworkers also received various on-site benefits, such as free electricity, bonuses and Christmas gifts, paid medical expenses and funeral insurance, and increasingly churches, community centres, and television and sport facilities (Graaff 1976). In comparison, farmworker conditions in Citrusdal were utterly bleak, since there were everywhere 'the symptoms of poverty and deprivation – illiteracy, high infant mortality, inadequate clothing, poor nutrition, endemic alcoholism ... Workers were paid the minimum amount necessary to keep them and their dependents alive' (Theron 1976: 1).

Based on the three 1976 papers, it seems that, at the time, working conditions were best in Elgin, followed by De Doorns, and Citrusdal conditions being worst. This situation would tie in with a theory that working conditions improved where the demand for labour increased. However, seemingly poorer working and living conditions, and more entrenched paternalism in Citrusdal, may also be due to the authors' different perspectives. At the time Theron (1976) was the regional director of the Institute of Race Relations in the Western Cape and his paper focused on labour conditions; Graaff (1976) was a De Doorns farmer De Doorns; while Levy (1976) was an economist, who focused on farmers' employment strategies, not farmworker working conditions.

In spite of the different foci of the 1976 papers, especially Theron (1976) and Graaff (1976) provide some information on working conditions, including wage information. However, due to Levy's (1976) focus, he did not provide wage information. Yet, given Levy (1976) argued Elgin working conditions were more favourable than those in De Doorns, it can probably be assumed that Elgin wages would at least be on par, if not better, than those in De Doorns in 1976. In this paper, compare 1976 wages to the 2015 minimum wage, wage figures provided by Graaff (1976) and Theron (1976) were converted to 2015 values. While farmworkers 1976 cash wages were much lower than the 2015 minimum wage (see *Table 2*), when in-kind payments are added to 1976 cash wages, the 1976 wage package compares more favourably with the 2015 minimum wage.

Table 2: A comparison of farmworker wages in 1976\* and 2015

1976	A: Monthly cash wage value			B: Monthly ration value <sup>+</sup>	C: Value of monthly cash wage+rations		
	Lowest	Highest	Average		Lowest	Highest	Average
Citrusdal	R 290	R 2 032	R 1 021	R 1 736	R 2 026	R3768	R 2 757
De Doorns	R 967	R 3 918	R 1 450		R 2 703	R 5 654	R 3 186
<b>2015 Minimum monthly wage: R2 606.79</b>							

\* 1976 wages were converted to 2015 values, at conversion rate of R1 in 1976= R36.28 in 2015.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>+</sup>To calculate the 1976 full ration value, Theron (1976:2) and Graaff's (1976:3) descriptions were used to "buy" the same basket of products at Shoprite in 2015.<sup>8</sup>

Source: Data extracted from Graaff 1976: 3-4; Theron 1976: 18-19.

In conclusion, in 1976, farm work had two sides. The downside was that in 1976, workers were not protected by labour rights, and forced labour and child labour were common. Due to paternalism, farmers largely controlled workers' lives, so farmworkers had little choice in how they lived their lives. Low cash wages further curtailed their options, while farmworkers' general isolation (especially in far-flung areas such as Citrusdal) restricted their mobility. Farmworkers had little scope for bargaining with employers, let alone collective bargaining. The upside of the 1976 period was that permanent work, albeit mostly reserved for men, was still much more common (arguably the biggest advantage of that period). Most male, permanent workers had access to free on-farm housing. However, the "benefit" of on-farm housing came with the disadvantage of being trapped in a paternalist relationship with an employer who had disproportionate power over workers and their dependents lives, even after-hours.

Even so, the Boland's Coloured agricultural workers seemed to have a fairly structurally strong workplace position due to a labour shortage, created by influx control, in areas such as Elgin and Grabouw. At the same time, apart from apple farmers – who had to contend with declining international market prices – farmers enjoyed much more state protection and market-place bargaining power, which, theoretically at least, meant that they may have benefited from (relatively) higher prices. Probably because of these factors, wage packages in areas of high labour demand – especially farm areas closer to urban areas – compared quite well to the minimum wage of today.

### 3. THE WESTERN CAPE FRUIT INDUSTRY TODAY

#### Main drivers of regulatory change post-1994

After democratisation, trade liberalisation – which had already begun with reduced agricultural state subsidies in the 1980s – was deliberately stepped up due to local and international pressure, and a change in government (Vink 1993, cited in Williams et al. 1998; Wegerif et al. 2005). Locally, the 1992 Kassier Committee criticised agricultural marketing schemes and recommended the abolishment of statutory single-channel marketing, uniform pricing, and the exercise of de facto statutory powers by private organisations, which granted an export monopoly of deciduous fruit to Unifruco and a citrus monopoly to Outspan International (Williams et al 1998: 74).

At an international level, the US-led Uruguay-round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) pressed governments to remove subsidies and to replace import controls and sliding tariffs. The World Bank took a key role in shaping policy debates in a 1993 ANC-aligned Land and Agricultural Policy Centre (LAPC) conference. It advised the ANC to adopt a new

<sup>7</sup> See: <http://www.inflationcalc.co.za/?date1=1976-01-01&date2=2015-07-01&amount=1>

<sup>8</sup> Weekly rations included 'a bunch of dried fish, a bucket of wheat meal, a packet of beans, 6 pounds of meat (beef), sometimes fat, 1 pound of rice, milk daily, fruit and vegetables on the not very frequent occasions they were available. These rations are fairly typical of the area' (Theron 1976: 2). As it was not regularly provided in 1976, this exercise excluded fruit from the 2015 basket.

agricultural pricing and marketing policy, and a land reform programme. The LAPC argued that agricultural liberalisation would not just lead to greater efficiency but would also reduce the privileges conferred on large-scale white farmers by the Apartheid state. More importantly, it was argued that trade liberalisation would level the playing fields on which black farmers had to compete with white farmers (Binswanger&Deiniger 1993, cited in Williams et al. 1998).

Economic liberalisation could only be completed when “organised agriculture” lost its place at the centre of government (Williams et al. 1998). The ANC’s 1994 election victory proved crucial to economic liberalisation, even though, given that the ANC and its alliance partners’ political philosophy and rhetoric were steeped in Marxism, Williams et al. (1997) comment that the government’s economic liberalisation policy was not expected by supporters or opponents.

The ANC’s Reconstruction and Development Programme also argued for removing controls and levies, and ‘unsustainable subsidies to the large-scale farm sector’, and committed to a land redistribution target of 30% of land under white ownership (ANC 1994a: 19– 22; 102–4, cited in Williams et al. 1998: 66). Market liberalisation was therefore narrowly tied to land reform.

Williams et al. (1998) argue that the new ANC government went even further than the World Bank’s proposals. While the World Bank (1993: 18–23) accepted the case, ‘at least on a transitional basis’ to coordinate ‘export marketing for citrus, deciduous fruit and wine’, the ANC’s 1994 Agricultural Policy aimed to remove ‘the remaining statutory powers of all control boards’ and end the statutory export monopolies (ANC 1994b: 17, cited in Williams et al. 1998). So by 1996 ‘the centre piece of state agricultural policy since 1937 – the Marketing Act’ – was abolished (Williams et al. 1998: 67).

### **Extended agricultural labour legislation**

Apart from trade liberalisation, the ANC government extended agricultural labour legislation post-democratisation. From 1993, farmworkers were partially incorporated into the previous labour regime, and by the mid-1990s farmworkers were fully incorporated, with the introduction of the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 (LRA) and Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997 (BCEA). In 2003, the Minister of Labour promulgated an agricultural sectoral determination which, for the first time, set a minimum wage and minimum working conditions for the sector. Passed in 1997, the Extension of Security and Tenure Act 62 of 1997 (ESTA), aimed to provide more tenure security to all farm dwellers and protect them from arbitrary eviction.

Post-1994, therefore, it can be argued that, on one level, the state ended extensive farmer-support measures: phasing out marketing boards, ending tariff controls, and reducing subsidy levels to farmers. The Producer Support Estimate to South African producers shrunk to about 3% – well below the 20% average enjoyed by farmers in member countries of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (OECD 2011, cited in Sender 2012).

At another level, the state intervened in the sector by passing legislation which aimed to give farmworkers better protection since, due to weak trade union organisation in the sector, farmworkers were considered vulnerable. The changes completely reversed the 1976 situation, where the state actively supported farmers, but repressed workers. Would the new approach significantly improve the lot of agricultural workers? Du Toit’s (2001) early prediction was that it would not, since policymakers did not recognise that trade liberalisation contradicted increased legislative protection for farmworkers. Both market deregulation and social regulations were seen as essential moves against the labour-repressive regime of the past.

Policymakers assumed that deregulation would either force out farmers who still held onto racist attitudes (perhaps even giving impetus to land redistribution) or force them to shift to more competitive – and more ‘progressive’ – labour management strategies (Lipton 1996; Ewert&Hamman 1999; Ewert 2000, cited in Du Toit 2001). Sometimes, policymakers

recognised that the new regulations would lead to labour-shedding, but it was seen as 'inevitable' and they argued that the trade-off would create better working conditions for those who stayed in employment.

Greenberg (2003: 2) argued that, due to restructuring in the global agro-food system, the insecurity faced by farmers

*... has a direct impact on farmers' labour hiring strategies. Thus, while workers have won improvements in laws and policies, and a more progressive and protective legal environment than in the past, the potential positive impacts have been weakened by the economic imperatives facing businesses in commercial agriculture.*

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The extent of 'inevitable' labour shedding is discussed later. In the next section, it is argued that policymakers possibly misjudged the impact their policies would have on the sector, as they failed to appreciate how the profound changes in international retail would also shape producers' responses to local policy changes.

## Growing supermarket power

After agricultural deregulation, structural power in tightly integrated global value chains – such as the fresh fruit value chain stretching between South Africa and the global North – shifted downstream (Ewert&Du Toit 2005). Instead of being the producer-driven chain it was in 1976, the horticultural value chain became buyer-driven (Barrientos&Visser 2012). This change – especially in the international fresh fruit value chain – resulted from two parallel processes: (1) deregulation of South African agricultural; and (2) gradual consolidation of both local and international retail since the 1980s (Kritzinger et al. 2004: 17; Du Toit 2001; Greenberg 2003; Barrientos&Visser 2012).

By the first decade of the new millennium, an estimated 75%–80% of the global North's food retail occurred in supermarkets, while supermarkets retailed 50% of food in some emerging economics (Reardon et al. 2007; Emonger&Kirsten 2009; Singh&Singla 2011; Coe et al. 2008, cited in Barrientos&Visser 2012). As the retail sector increasingly consolidated, distribution channels became more integrated in the global horticultural value chain. Today, supermarkets are directly involved in all stages of the chain: primary production and packing, cold chain management and storage; transport; export; and sometimes even to final distribution (Greenberg, 2003). Retailers coordinate supply networks involving importers, exporters and growers with whom they pre-programme their orders on a weekly basis, often six months in advance (Barrientos&Barrientos 2002; Barrientos et al. 2004).

As supermarkets compete with each other and are pressurised to increase shareholder returns, horticultural value chain integration continues apace to cut unnecessary costs from the chain. For instance, while Barrientos et al. (2004) remark that some supermarkets outsourced value chain management to 'category managers', eight years later Barrientos and Visser (2012) note that international supermarkets are moving away from category managers towards global sourcing platforms. Supermarkets effectively "govern" value chains: their ability to set prices and determine the quality, processes and social standards under which goods are produced have been well documented (Du Toit 2001; Barrientos&Barrientos 2002; Kritzinger et al. 2004; Barrientos&Smith 2007; Greenberg 2003; Greenberg 2013). Increasingly, international retailers are becoming supra-national kingpins who make the rules that upstream value chain actors have to abide by.

## Producers under pressure

### Margins under pressure

Several authors have commented on retailers' ability to set farm gate prices, such that most of the rent on the final retail price of (fresh) agricultural product accrues to them (Greenberg 2003; Greenberg 2013, Barrientos&Barrientos 2002; Barrientos&Visser 2012; Visser&Ferrer 2015). In the South African agricultural context, a review of literature on how this power relationship plays out provides some concrete examples. In their comparison to international horticulture value chains touching down in Chile and South Africa, Barrientos and Barrientos (2002) found that producer-cooperatives who also export get about 28–30% of the final retail price, while supermarket retailers get about 35–40%. Barrientos and Visser (2012) found that, of the 2011 final retail price for table grapes exported to the UK, supermarkets capture 42%, distributors capture 32%, while growers receive 18% (and 26% if they pack their own fruit). Visser and Ferrer (2015) found that from 2003 to 2013 producers never received more than 27.5% and 29.4% respectively of the final retail price for apples and pears; for six years producers received less than 6% for apples and less than 9% for pears.

The financial position of wine grape producers is even worse. In the early 2000s, via taxes and Systembolaget<sup>9</sup>, the Swedish state earned about 68.6% of the final retail price on a bottle of branded wine sold in Sweden. Wine grape growers received 0.8%, while wine producers earned 1.5%. For wine sold in bulk, wine grape growers and wine producers' earned 4% and 2% respectively (Greenberg 2003). In ten years since Greenberg's (2003) study, the situation has not changed: in 2015 farmers only received a 2% of the final price of a bottle of branded wine (Visser&Ferrer 2015). (However, researchers often have to rely on industry sources for information, so it is difficult to get reliable information on the breakdown of final retail prices).

Evidence suggests that producer margins specifically weakened after deregulation. Barrientos et al. (2004, citing the Deciduous Fruit Producers' Trust 2003) note that real net export realisation in Rands per ton of apples fell from R2 130 (US\$242.5) in 1993–1994 to R935 (US\$150.8) in 1998–1999 (a year after deregulation) and only rose back to R1 352 (US\$218) by 2001–2002 (only 63% of its value in eight years previously). An industry source told Symington (2008, cited in Barrientos&Visser 2012) that the pre-Christmas price for a 9 kg carton of table grapes fell from £39 to £22 from 1998 (a year after deregulation) to 2004. Symington (2008) also maintained that UK retailers increased their gross margins from 15% to as much as 35% over the same period.

### Poor purchase practices

Apart from low prices, retailers' poor purchasing practices also increased producer vulnerability. Retailers often do not provide written contracts or guarantees of purchase beyond a verbal agreement; and they often buy fruit on 'consignment' – with no prices agreed on until very close to the point of final delivery. Producers complained about shorter lead times between order and delivery, and the insecurity of orders (Kritzinger et al. 2004; Barrientos&Visser 2012; Barrientos&Smith 2007; Bolwig et al. 2010). Retailers also increasingly exert pressure on producers to meet a range of demands, such as codes controlling product quality and the processes under which food is produced. Du Toit and Ally (2003) argue that these codes – essentially a form of private sector self-regulation – are as important as formal legislation.

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<sup>9</sup> The Swedish state-owned alcohol retailing monopoly.

## Producer mechanisms to cope with a changed policy environment

The cumulative effect of trade liberalisation, the introduction of labour legislation, land reform, increasing retail consolidation, and rising quality standards have “tightened the screws” on South African fruit and wine producers (Du Toit 2001; Du Toit&Ally 2003; Greenberg 2003; Kritzing et al. 2004; Barrientos&Smith 2007; Ewert&Du Toit 2005).

### Capital flight

One way that farmers have responded to state interference has been through capital flight. Where they could, farmers as a collective have tried to escape state interference. The Cooperatives Amendment Act 37 of 1993 enabled the cooperatives to convert to private companies (Williams et al. 1998; Ewert&Du Toit 2005). Major agricultural co-operatives took the gap and transformed into limited companies (Williams et al. 1998). Controversially, in some instances, expensive infrastructure, accumulated by cooperatives with state resources during Apartheid, ended up in the hands of private shareholders (Mather&Greenberg 2003).

### Consolidation

At individual farm-level, deregulation has had uneven effects. Some farmers benefitted from tighter integration into value chains, while others went out of business. While the process farm and agribusiness consolidation of farms and agribusinesses is described in general terms by various authors (e.g. Greenberg 2003; Greenberg et al 2012; Ewert&Du Toit 2005; Barrientos&Visser 2012; Meyer et al. 2012), clear correlations between deregulation and farm consolidation is not well established. The number of table grape growers declined by 30% between 2007 and 2011 (Barrientos&Visser 2012, citing SATI 2011). Similarly, between 2005 and 2011 the number of grower units, ranging in size from 100ha and 250ha, increased by 19% (Meyer et al. 2012). Both processes occurred nearly ten years after deregulation and it is more likely that the start of the 2008 economic recession contributed to consolidation. However, there is normally a time lag of four to six years between a rise in labour costs and the effect on deciduous fruit production (Meyer et al. 2012). While deregulation would not have led to higher wage costs, it did seemingly (initially) result in lower prices. Perhaps a similar lag effect caused a delay between lower prices (as a result of deregulation) and farm consolidation a few years later.

Farmers who stayed in business also seem to have expanded and intensified production to benefit from economies of scale (Visser&Ferrer 2015; Van Dyk&Maspero 2004). While expansion and intensification could have impacts on the environment, little known research has measured this impact on the environment.

### Mechanisation

As labour costs are a major factor in production costs, farmers mechanise where possible. Wine harvesting machines can replace up to seventy workers per twelve hour shift (De Satgé 2010). While some Western Cape wine farms have mechanised, the extent thereof has been debated. A 1997 survey found that of 104 wine farms, 36% used mechanical harvesters (Ewert et al. 1998). By 2014, Vinpro found that about 58% of hectares belonging to (mostly larger) producers in its study group were mechanically harvested (Visser&Ferrer 2015). However, mechanical harvesters used for wine grape harvesting cost about R3 million, and a seller of harvesting machines alleged that only the top 4% of producers can afford them (Visser&Ferrer 2015). Economies of scales would also influence decisions to buy harvesters as the average labour costs of the top fifty wine grape producers – where one would expect to find mechanisation – are only about 5% lower than the industry average (Visser&Ferrer 2015).

For easily perishable crops (e.g. table grapes, deciduous fruit and citrus), the scope for mechanisation is much more limited. According to the industry body, Hortgro, a few producers are exploring the use of picking platforms, which cut out the need to use ladders in orchards. However, the chair of a Ceres producers’ association argued that it was likely that 70– 80% of

activities on fruit farms will remain manual (Visser&Ferrer 2015). Where producers cannot mechanise, they tend to use “labour augmenting technologies”, such as pre-cutters to prune vineyards (a pre-cutter can do the work of about fifteen people over a ten week period) (Visser&Ferrer 2015).

In pack houses, however, up to 40% of workers can be replaced by mechanisation and pack house modification (Meyer 2012), so pack house mechanisation could result in job losses for almost 10 000 seasonal workers and 2 300 permanent workers. A move towards pack house mechanisation would be especially devastating for women workers, who have traditionally been favoured for pack house work.

Finally, producers are also switching to less labour intensive crops to save labour costs and benefit from more lucrative cultivars, e.g. switching from seeded to seedless varieties in the table grape sector (seedless varieties fetch higher prices and use up to a third less labour).

### Restructuring labour

Permanent labour is much more expensive than seasonal labour. Across agricultural subsectors, by far the most common cost-cutting strategy has been to restructure labour since, despite fairly small increases in the minimum wage, labour costs have risen significantly, especially in labour intensive subsectors (Visser&Ferrer 2015). For instance:

- in the table grape industry, labour costs have increased from 35% of gross farm income in 2000 to 52% by 2011 (Barrientos&Visser 2012);
- in the wine industry, labour costs make up 41% of total direct production costs (Murray 2011);
- for the typical 55ha (apple and pear) farm, permanent labour cost account for 45% of overhead costs and 26% of total costs (Meyer et al 2012).

In the wine industry, while seasonal labour costs per hectare rose by 53%, permanent labour costs rose by 98% from 2010 to 2013 (Visser&Ferrer 2015). Restructuring strategies have aimed to reduce the number of permanent workers by retrenching and replacing permanent workers with seasonal workers (“casualisation”) or contract workers (“externalisation”)<sup>10</sup> (Barrientos&Barrientos 2002; Barrientos et al. 2004; Bolwig et al. 2010; Barrientos&Visser 2012; Du Toit 2001; Ewert&DuToit 2005; Ewert&Hamman 1996; Greenberg 2003; Kritzinger&Vorster 1995; Kritzinger et al. 2004; Simbi&Aliber 2000; Sunde&Kleinbooi 1999, cited in Du Toit 2001; Visser&Ferrer 2015).

### Measuring labour losses without reliable data

Measuring the extent of agricultural job losses and/or externalisation, and linking them to specific factors is difficult (Du Toit&Ally 2003; Theron et al. 2007; Barrientos et al. 2004; Barrientos&Visser 2012). One reason for the difficulty is that measurement instruments used in nationwide surveys have changed over time.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Definitions of “casualisation” and “externalization” as proposed by Theron et al (2011: 7) are applied here. Casualisation refers to direct employment that is part-time or temporary and therefore not standard. Externalisation refers to indirect or triangular employment, where employees are also commonly employed on a temporary basis, but through an agency or intermediary or service provider, so that the employment contract between a core business and its employees is replaced by a commercial contract between the core business and an agency, intermediary or service provider.

<sup>11</sup> While the 1993 and 2002 censuses were to survey everyone employed in agriculture, the 2005-survey only included those employed on farms with an annual turnover of more than R2 million. Also, in the 2002 census, 17 090 of the 45 818 potential respondents (i.e. more than a third) did not respond. Moreover, a strict comparison of the number of casual/ seasonal workers in 1993, 2002 and 2005 is impossible: the 1993 census asked how many seasonal/casual workers were employed on 29 February 1993, while the 2002 census asked how many casual and seasonal workers worked less and more than 90 days in 2002. The 2005 survey excluded contractors and their employees from the category of casual and seasonal employees.

Table 3 indicates how difficult it is to form a picture of employment losses over time, given that such losses often indicate different time periods that do not neatly overlap, or are expressed in terms of percentages. Moreover, authors do not necessarily use the same data sets and/or have the same interpretations of data, further thwarting comparison.

At a regional level, Ewert and Du Toit (2005), citing the 1996 agricultural census, point out that agricultural employment only increased in the Western Cape and Mpumalanga (presumably since 1994, although the period is unclear). However, by 2014 agricultural growth per region changed. Visser and Ferrer (2015, citing Quarterly Labour Force Survey 3 of 2014 of StatsSA 2014)) argue that while employment of farmhands and labourers, on average, declined from 2008 to 2014 in KwaZulu-Natal, the Free State, the North West Province, the Western Cape, Limpopo and Mpumalanga employment has tended to increase. Although the agriculture data is unreliable and should be treated cautiously, certain broad trends are noticeable:

Table 3: Data on employment losses gleaned from the literature review\*

	Author	Timespan	Decline/Increase	Source
Nationwide surveys	Liebenberg 2013: 18-19	1980-2010	110% decline in agricultural employment nationwide	Unknown
	Wegerif et al. 2005: 8	Mid-1980s-2002	30% decline in total employment in agriculture nationwide (from 1.3 million to 1 million)	StatsSA&NDA 2000: 32; StatsSA 2005
	Simbi&Aliber 2000:2	1988-1998	20% decline in the number of “regular jobs” on commercial farms	StatsSA&NDA 2000
	Theron et al. 2007: 12	1993-2001	32% decline in agricultural employment nationwide	DFID Southern Africa
	Stanwix 2013: 2	2003-2007	Decline of 13% in aggregate employment on farms	15 waves of the SA Labour Force Survey (LFS), September 2000-September 2007
Subsectoral surveys, relying on industry data	Ewert&Du Toit 2005: 327	1987-1997	5% increase in permanent employment in wine industry	Refers to a survey of 104 farms by Ewert et al. (1997)
	Ewert&Du Toit 2005: 327	1994-1998	7% increase in employment in wine industry	SAWIS (1994); (1998)
	Barrientos&Visser 2012: 5	2005-2011	4% growth in the number of full time equivalent positions for the deciduous fruit industry overall	Hortgrow industry overview, Feb 2012

While total employment in the agricultural sector seemingly decreased, the deciduous fruit industry permanent workers slightly increased by about 4% between 2005 and 2011. However, this growth has not been uniform: some subsectors, such as those producing table grapes, plums and nectarines, saw employment growth, while others saw a decline (Barrientos&Visser 2012).

### Casualisation

Gauging the extent of casualisation is also difficult, because of the different categorisations researchers have used to group workers. For instance, Levy (1976) treated those who work on the farm for nine months of the year as permanent. Du Toit and Ally (2003: 10) distinguish between “permanent jobs”, “regular jobs”, and “off-farm temporary workers”, defining (1) “permanent jobs” as jobs performed by people who are formally contracted as permanent employees on a particular farm; (2) “regular jobs” as for ‘on-farmworkers – often the female partners or dependants of permanent male workers – who work on an “as needed” basis ... who are not formally recognised as permanent workers ... [but] have a permanent relationship with the farm’; and (3) “off-farm temporary workers” as those who do not live on the farm and are employed to do work on a temporary basis. In some instances, Du Toit and Ally (2003) group “regular jobs” and “permanent jobs” together, so it is difficult to get a sense of how many people work full-time and how many part-time.



Distinctions are also often made between so-called “casual workers” – viewed as temporary workers who work for a very short period on the farm, sometimes without a contract – and seasonal workers, who are on the farm for the duration of a season. However the term “seasonal worker” can be a misnomer in some contexts, as some “seasonal workers” work for longer than the duration of the harvesting season. For instance, in the case of the table grape industry there are four distinct, but almost continuous seasons: pre-thinning; thinning and harvesting; then a short break, ending with the pruning season. Some seasonal workers are employed in all of these seasons, so they end up working for ten months of the year. Moreover, Bhorat et al. (2014) point out that LFS data on farmworkers’ non-permanent employment arrangements (i.e., temporary, seasonal, or contract work) fluctuates greatly over time, suggesting poor reporting and data collection.

Overall though, the literature mostly concurs that casualisation is increasing and is more rife on labour-intensive farms that cannot mechanise and where labour demand fluctuates between peak and off-peak periods (Ewert&Du Toit 2005; Greenberg 2003; Barrientos&Visser 2012; Meyer et al. 2012; Visser&Ferrer 2015; Alford 2015). For example, in the deciduous fruit and citrus sub-sectors extensive casualisation has taken place. Du Toit and Ally (2003) found that, in their sample of 77 farms, about 60% had reduced the number of permanent jobs on their farms.

In ten years, casualisation evidently further intensified. In the Sunday River’s Valley, over 90% of citrus production jobs (on farms and in pack houses), in the peak harvesting season, were seasonal (Visser&Ferrer 2015). In the wine, apple and pear, and table grape subsectors, seasonal workers comprised 80% of workers during the peak season (Visser&Ferrer 2015). The seasonal component decreased in the off-peak season, but on at least half of the farms in the Western Cape, more than 50% of the workforce remained seasonal (Visser&Ferrer 2015). Meyer et al. (2012) argue that as the minimum wage per day increases from R70 to R150, casualisation will also rise.

### Externalisation

Workers employed by labour brokers are used for a range of different tasks throughout the year, most requiring unskilled work (Du Toit&Ally 2003; Visser&Ferrer 2015). Therefore, labour brokers do not seem to be employed to fulfil skilled work that cannot be performed by a farmer’s own labour force. Workers also do not seem particularly inaccessible to the farmer, because of where they stay. Du Toit and Ally (2003) found that in most cases (78.6%) labour brokers supplied locally-based workers and the broker was often also based in the same area. Hence, contract workers could easily have been sourced by the farmer him/herself directly (Du Toit&Ally 2003).

In Du Toit and Ally’s (2001) survey, only 26.8% of farmers listed cost savings as a motive for using brokers, and some authors have found that labour brokers increase farmers’ labour costs, because of the fees they charge. Instead, farmers favour the convenience of not having to recruit and manage a temporary workforce (Du Toit&Ally 2003; Barrientos&Visser 2012; Greenberg 2012). Another advantage of engaging brokers is that they can secure labour at short notice (Visser&Ferrer 2015; Theron 2009) – an important consideration when produce quality is increasingly paramount. If yields are unexpectedly high, or if rainy weather delays harvesting, the normal labour force may not be able to harvest the crop at optimum ripeness levels, which would negatively affect fruit quality and prices. Farmers also said that using brokers meant not having to provide workers with housing; not having to deal with workers’ social problems after hours (Visser&Ferrer 2015). Using brokers was a screening tool to gauge workers’ job performance before they were directly employed (Visser& Ferrer 2015; Theron 2009).

### *Networks and the power of labour brokers in De Doorns*

Several studies note the influence of labour brokers, their local knowledge and extensive networks in their respective communities (Kritzinger et al. 2004; Theron 2009; Misago 2009). Many brokers are ex-farmworkers (usually foremen and supervisors), so have intimate knowledge of the nature of farm work, but also of farmworker communities (Kritzinger et al. 2004; Theron 2009). Brokers are important gatekeepers to work. They even provide “permanent” work to some off-farmworkers year round by stringing together different short-term contracts with farmers (Theron 2010; Kritzinger et al. 2004). Brokers also provide employment for their teams in counter-seasonal regions when work in the area where they are based dries up (Theron&Visser 2012).

Off-farm women are particularly dependent on brokers and their relationship with brokers often resembles the paternalist relationship between farmers and their on-farm workforce. Nevertheless, brokers help their workers in various ways, such as: (1) helping them to get work; (2) helping them to access credit; granting them loans; transporting them to and from work; and also helping with personal problems (Barrientos&Kritzinger 2004; Du Toit&Ally 2003). However, brokers more often than not have “fluid relationships” with a vast, reserve pool of off-farmworkers that they hire from time-to-time. The fluid relationship is perpetuated by the brokers’ own relative insecurity in the value chain, given that they seldom have fixed contracts with farmers (Du Toit&Ally 2003; Theron 2009). Contractors often operate under huge pressure, with very narrow margins, and competing on price.

Hence, especially smaller brokers struggle to operate sustainable businesses. It has been argued that local labour brokers – disgruntled that Zimbabwean brokers scored most of the contracts with farmers – contributed to the social conflict in De Doorns during the xenophobic attacks of 2008/9 (Theron 2010; Misago 2009; Robb 2009). Their insecure position in the value chain affects their ability to pay minimum wages and contribute to the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) (Du Toit&Ally 2003; Theron 2010; Theron&Visser 2012; Barrientos et al. 2004; Barrientos&Kritzinger 2003).

Given labour brokers’ inability to guarantee compliance with labour legislation and their fluid relationships with most workers, workers engaged by labour brokers often keep their options open and will work for whichever contractor can provide work at the highest wage in a particular week (Du Toit and Ally 2003). As there are potential transaction costs for workers for switching between brokers, and the risk of alienating a broker who provides them with regular work, it would be interesting to know if keeping options open is the default position or an exception.

### *Private standards and brokers*

Since 2007, private standards have become increasingly common on fruit farms in the Western Cape. After the 2013-protests, such standards were also much more vigorously enforced in the wine industry. The standards apply both to workers directly employed by the farmer and to workers supplied by labour brokers. To ensure compliance with labour legislation, many producers have begun to directly employ seasonal workers supplied by labour brokers, using labour brokers only to recruit and/or supervise workers. Apart from ethical trade standards, quality standards also lead to farmers reconsidering the use of labour brokers: a key disadvantage of using brokers includes poor quality workmanship (Visser&Ferrer 2015).

### *Prevalence*

Due to various definitions of what constitutes labour brokering, it is difficult to get an accurate picture of the extent of externalisation. A further complication is that farmers tend to under-report or hide their use of labour brokers (due to controversy surrounding the practice).<sup>12</sup> Convincing labour brokers to participate in any research – to gauge the extent of externalisation and the different forms it takes – is also difficult.

<sup>12</sup> The Congress of Trade Unions of South Africa (COSATU) has lobbied government to ban of labour brokers.

Although much has been made in the literature about a “growing” externalisation trend on fruit and wine farms in the Western Cape, the claim is based on fairly thin evidence. A scan of the Western Cape literature did not reveal many studies specifically focused on externalisation, although studies that have adopted a (more) purposeful focus, include Du Toit and Ally (2003); Barrientos et al. (2004); Kritzinger et al (2004); Visser and Ferrer (2014) and to a lesser extent, given its small sample, Theron (2010). A more comprehensive study measuring the extent of externalisation, the different forms it takes and whether incidence has changed over time, seems overdue.

From the few studies that cover labour brokering, the use of labour brokers seems to have remained static, despite interesting variations per region, crop type and over time. In three studies about half of producers in their respective samples engaged brokers (Du Toit&Ally 2003; Barrientos&Kritzinger 2004; Visser&Ferrer 2015).<sup>13</sup> One study found that labour brokers provided 30–50% of some producers’ temporary workforce (Visser&Ferrer 2015).

The incidence of labour brokering sometimes differs between regions. While both Grabouw and Ceres are major apple production areas, in their sample Du Toit and Ally (2003: 18) found that all the Grabouw farmers, but only 38% of Ceres farmers used a broker. In the Robertson area (which has a mix of fruit and wine farms), labour brokering seemed common, with about fifty contractors attending an information session hosted by the Department of Labour post-2012, indicating a high prevalence of labour brokering in that area (Visser&Ferrer 2015).

When disaggregating Du Toit and Ally’s (2003) sample by crop type, interesting differences emerge: while almost all deciduous fruit farmers and 57% of wine grape farmers used brokers, but only 33% of table grape producers used brokers. In her study, Conradie (2007) found an even lower use of brokers (10%) by table grape farmers, which is surprising, given the high labour intensity of the industry.

Labour brokering also seems to fluctuate over time. While 57% of wine farmers in Du Toit and Ally’s sample (2003) used labour brokers, ten years later Theron (2012) found that brokering was less of an issue among Rawsonville wine farmers. Theron (2012) suggests that the low use of contract workers may be due to the mechanisation of the grape harvesting in the area. However, it has also been suggested that the extent of mechanisation in the wine industry is exaggerated (Visser&Ferrer 2015). In the most recent survey of the sector, brokers contracted 30% of off-farmworkers; the rest were directly employed by farmers (de Satgé&Blecher 2015).

The fluctuating use of labour brokering in the Hex River Valley’s table grape growing region is especially perplexing. In 1976, 65% of workers employed in the six week thinning period in De Doorns were off-farmworkers from De Doorns, Worcester and Touws River (Levy 1976). While Levy (1976) never explicitly referred to labour brokering, his reference to the use of “middlemen” by table grape farmers is suggestive. He noted that these ‘agents-cum-team leaders’ generally received higher wages than their team and may have received a bonus per worker recruited. Hence, labour brokering might already have been common in De Doorns by 1976.

While Du Toit and Ally (2003) and Conradie (2007) respectively found that only 33% and 10% of table grape farmers in their De Doorns samples used contractors, by 2009 – following the outbreak of xenophobic attacks in De Doorns – Misago (2009) found 60–80 contractors in the De Doorns area. Hence, it seems that labour brokering grew rapidly in the area between 2004 and 2009 – unless one or more authors either over- or under-reported the use of brokers. It seems as if labour brokering in De Doorns peaked in the 2008/9 season and thereafter declined.

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<sup>13</sup>Theron (2010) did not interview producers, so we do not know from that study to what extent producers in De Doorns were using labour brokers).

After the xenophobic attacks, farmers instead employed off-farmworkers directly and used foremen to recruit temporary workers (Theron&Visser 2012; Theron 2012). The decline of labour brokering in De Doorns after 2009 may have been due to COSATU's campaign to ban labour brokering (Theron&Visser 2010). However, it is unlikely that COSATU's campaign, on its own, would have swayed farmers, given extremely low levels of unionisation in the sector (less than 5% nationally) and farmers' relative lack of concern about unionisation (Du Toit& Ally 2003).

Another factor that may have contributed to less labour brokering is the mainstreaming of private ethical audits. Farmers may attach more importance to private audits than inspections by the Department of Labour, as non-compliance found in private audits may prompt retailers to terminate contracts with a farmer (Visser&Ferrer 2015). However, this argument is tentative; more research is needed to ascertain link(s) between private standards and externalisation.

### *The trend to source workers from off-farm areas*

Since 1998, farmers have increasingly sourced seasonal workers from off-farm locations (Du Toit&Ally 2003; Williams et al. 1998; Barrientos&Barrientos 2002; Barrientos&Kritzinger 2004; Greenberg, 2003; Theron, 2009; Visser&Ferrer 2015). Moreover, producers increasingly source *permanent* workers from off-farm locations (Greenberg 2003; Theron 2009; Visser&Ferrer 2015). The use of permanent off-farmworkers was especially high in areas that produce labour-intensive crops and that are close to Traditional Communal Areas (TCAs) (Visser&Ferrer 2015). In the Western Cape, long distances between farms and local towns were associated with employing mostly on-farm permanent workers. Overall, Visser and Ferrer (2015) found that Western Cape farmers were much more likely to house permanent workers on-farm.

Greenberg et al. (2012) and Du Toit and Ally (2003) respectively found that between 35% and 50% of farmers surveyed used off-farmworkers. However, as only 25% of workers in Greenberg et al.'s (2012) sample were seasonal, the percentage of workers living off-farm was bound to be lower.

While the trend to source workers from off-farm locations is linked, in the literature, to the introduction of ESTA (Mather 2000; Barrientos&Barrientos 2002; Greenberg 2003; Du Toit&Ally 2003; Atkinson 2007; Visser&Ferrer 2015; De Satgé&Blecher 2015), it is unclear why the shift occurred, i.e. was it due to evictions, retrenchment, firing of workers, attrition, or a combination of these factors? Greenberg (2003) suggests that natural attrition and encouragement from farmers likely caused the shift. For example, farmers might help workers to get housing in town, pay them an off-farm allowance, and 'a set of other incentives to encourage farmworkers to leave the land and establish their own houses in nearby townships' (Greenberg 2003: 11-12). Incentives may include helping farmworkers to secure loans and/or government housing grants; giving them loans to build housing; and/or helping them to pay for municipal services in the short term (Greenberg 2003). Some farmers were encouraging retrenched workers and permanent workers who were demoted to seasonal workers to move off the farm by agreeing to pay them cash (Visser&Ferrer 2015).

Wegerif et al. (2005) suggest that the shift to a predominantly off-farm workforce has happened mainly through workers being displaced: between 1984 and 2004, 3.7 million farm dwellers were displaced. Importantly, Wegerif et al. (2005: iii) define a farm dweller as 'any person, other than the owner, who is living on a farm', i.e. this is a much wider group than just the subgroup of farmworkers and also includes farmworkers' dependents<sup>14</sup>. De Satgé and Blecher's (2015) survey supports Wegerif et al.'s finding: 44% of off-farmworkers interviewed claimed that they had previously lived on farms and that they had been evicted. The growth of off-farm settlements in De Doorns and Rawsonville includes 'a predominantly Coloured segment which was formerly resident on farms in the area, and Coloured and African migrants, both internal and foreign, who have been drawn to the area because of the availability of work' (Theron 2012: 3).

<sup>14</sup> Wegerif et al. (2005) found that 49% of the evictees in their study were children.

Wegerif et al. (2005) found that, of the evicted farm dwellers in their sample, only 32% remained in rural areas; the rest moved to formal and informal urban areas.<sup>15</sup> This finding, coupled with Levy's (1976) finding that off-farmworkers were already prevalent in the Elgin and De Doorns areas in 1976, seems to challenge an assumption that most workers living in the townships of the Boland's agricultural towns have been evicted from farms. For instance, already by 1976, Levy (1976) found that seventeen of the eighteen farmers in his De Doorns sample recruited off-farm labour during the table grape thinning period. The *permanent* workers in Elgin (47%) and De Doorns (35%) did not stay permanently on the farms, but migrated between the farms and their permanent homestead (seemingly the Transkei).

All-in-all little seems to be known about the (potentially changed) demographic profile of the seasonal workforce or the demography of new townships that have sprung up next to rural agricultural towns in the last 20 years. The growth of townships and informal areas in agricultural nodes; their composition; the factors that have driven growth; and the relationship between their residents and the agricultural sector present a considerable research gap.

Lastly, it is not clear how to measure the growth of off-farmworkers: should only workers living in settlements in rural towns be counted or also migrant workers living on-farm in hostel-type accommodation? What about workers living on a farm, but working on a different farm? And how prevalent is the use of the latter two sources of off-farm labour? De Satgé and Blecher (2015) note that about 28% of producers in their sample provided some temporary on-farm accommodation to seasonal workers; the rest transported off-farmworkers to and from town daily. The question arises as to why farmers resort to using on-farm seasonal workers (who are not family members of permanent workers) at all given the seeming availability of a large pool of off-farmworkers. The literature provides no clear explanations for this labour strategy.

#### *Implications of shifting to an off-farm workforce*

The shift to an increasingly off-farm workforce is a serious downgrading in the living and working conditions of farmworkers, due to the loss of on-farm housing and many concomitant benefits. Although on-farm housing is far from ideal, off-farm housing is dismal by comparison (Kritzinger et al. 2004; Visser&Ferrer 2015; De Satgé&Blecher 2015). The loss of on-farm housing often affects more than just the on-farmworker's nuclear family: Greenberg et al.'s (2012) survey, a quarter of respondents indicated that they lived in their parents, grandparents or siblings, so if employees are evicted, often their dependents are also evicted. Wegerif et al. (2005) note that, in their survey, three quarters of those evicted were women and children who were the dependents of farm dwellers.

There are signs that farmers are divesting in on-farm housing. Du Toit&Ally (2003) found that about 50% of the farms in their survey had more than three houses standing empty. Ten years later, the FARE report (cited in Visser&Ferrer 2015) also noticed the phenomenon of empty farmworker. An off-farm workforce places a huge burden on rural municipalities at a cost to the state, and there are many signs that rural municipalities are not coping with this responsibility (Du Toit&Ally 2003:48; Visser & Ferrer, 2015; De Satgé & Blecher, 2015).

#### *Migration*

It has been noted that African internal migrant labour was already used in Elgin and De Doorns in 1976. A number of studies point towards the continuous use of African migrants in Grabouw (Du Toit & Ally, 2003; Barrientos & Kritzinger, 2004: 87), De Doorns (Theron, 2009), Ceres (Barrientos&Kritzinger 2004; Visser & Ferrer 2015: 145) and Robertson (Du Toit & Ally 2003).

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<sup>15</sup> Wegerif et al. (2005) only say what happened to evicted farmer dwellers, not all the displaced farm dwellers.

Zimbabwean migrants have also created a new Western Cape agricultural landscape. Since the start of Zimbabwe's political crisis, regional migration from Zimbabwe to South African farms countrywide has massively increased (in particular to Limpopo farms) (Visser & Ferrer 2015, citing Wisborg et al. 2013). Zimbabwean workers have also been reported in the Western Cape, especially in De Doorns (Theron 2009; Misago 2009, Visser & Ferrer 2015).

In De Doorns, Theron (2012) found a perception that farmers were employing Zimbabweans because they were prepared to work for lower wages. However, Theron (2012) found no evidence that Zimbabweans were exploited. Instead, he concluded that farmers preferred to work with Zimbabweans because they had higher levels of education. Seven of the Zimbabwean farmworkers he interviewed had completed their O-Levels, one had completed his A-Levels, and two had university degrees. Compared to the populace of the valley they were highly educated (Theron 2012). Also Barrientos and Visser (2012: 22) note that, for producers, recruiting Zimbabwean and Mozambique labour filled gap in 'the right type of workers'.

A hallmark of the 'right type of worker', apart from being skilled, is being reliable. An advantage of housing workers on-farm is that farmers can control workers' activities, not only during working hours, but also after hours to ensure that they attend and are fit for work. This version of paternalism is thus extended to non-permanent workers, explaining, for instance, why farmers sometimes employ migrant workers and house them on-farm, even when their farms are quite close to the abundant labour in rural townships. Describing this oversupply of labour, Ewert & Du Toit (2005: 329) note:

*[O]n any given day, there are many more work seekers than the farmer needs. In scenes reminiscent of 'Grapes of Wrath', the farmer or his foreman can pick and choose among those clambering to get onto the lorry for a day's wages."*

Another example of paternalism is that farm managers find that providing two free meals a day drastically increases worker productivity (Barrientos & Visser 2012). Migrant on-farmworkers seem to replace the dependents of permanent workers of yore who were forced to work on the farm. While not being forced to work, migrant on-farmworkers are similarly a "captured" labour force.

Apart from the lack of data on migrants in rural agricultural areas, even less is known about the potential existence of inter-regional worker migrants to benefit from counter-seasonal peak periods (e.g. between orange harvesting from May to August, and table grape harvesting from October to March). Theron (2012) came across signs of such migration between the table grape area of De Doorns and citrus areas of the Eastern Cape. Theron (2012, citing Robb 2009) also refers to farmers from as far away as the Eastern Cape and Namibia collecting workers from De Doorns to work on their farms. Theron reports that the Hex River Table Grape Association (HTA) believes that De Doorns has become a labour recruiting ground for other areas. How such migration works and the impact on local municipalities is under explored.

All-in-all, fairly little is known about: (1) where migrants come from; (2) the extent to which migrants from elsewhere in South Africa are still used in the Western Cape after influx control was abolished in the 1980s; (3) how they find work in the area; (4) how long they stay; and (5) why farmers still use them, given the apparent glut of labour in rural townships.

### *Evictions*

Wegerif et al. (2005) contend that of the 3.7 million people displaced from commercial farms between 1984 and 2004, about 1.7 million dwellers were evicted – mostly illegally. According to De Satgé and Blecher (2015) attempts have been made to discredit Wegerif et al.'s (2005) findings, because they extrapolated eviction figures from a relatively small sample to determine

figures for the entire country over a 21-year period (Coetzee 2007; Annandale 2010).<sup>16</sup> Also Todes et al. (2010: 337) argue that the scale of displacement reported by Wegerif et al. (2005) is debatable and that their figures are possibly ‘too high’. They argue that Wegerif et al.’s (2005) figures do not accord with census data, which shows an increase of Africans on commercial farms.<sup>17</sup> More recently, in De Satgé and Blecher’s (2015) survey of 82 off-farmworkers, 43.6% of those who previously lived on farms claimed that they had been evicted.

Other studies had much less definitive conclusions about the extent of evictions. On the farms in their study, Du Toit & Ally (2003) found that 57% of the farms in their survey had worker houses standing empty. Of those farms, about 50% had more than three houses standing empty, which they argue, could point to possible evictions. However, they note that it was not clear if the houses were in good condition or derelict, and when or why they had been evacuated.

A scoping study conducted by Annandale (2010, cited by De Satgé&Blecher 2015) highlights the confusing array of figures in the literature about the extent of evictions. Annandale (2010) found that, despite reports of a sharp increase in evictions in 2005–2010, the Department of Land Affairs and its successor, the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR), recorded only 357 registered evictions in the Cape Winelands District Municipality for that period. Similarly, Visser and Ferrer (2015, citing Andrews 2013) note that after the 2012 De Doorns protest, when they tried to verify reports of increased evictions from Western Cape farms, they found that municipalities seldom had records of evictions on hand. More often than not a special search was needed before any statistics were made available – if such data was made available at all. The Land Claims Court is meant to be the main source of information on legal evictions, but despite numerous requests to an officer of that court, no information on evictions was provided. Where statistics were made available by different levels of government (e.g. a municipality and the provincial office of the DRDLR), conflicting information was often provided, making it very difficult to get a real sense of the problem (Visser&Ferrer 2015). Also, De Satgé and Blecher (2015) note the absence of a streamlined system of notification. They could find no evidence of district wide recording and analysis of eviction trends. Moreover, respondents in their study were confused about the correct avenue for reporting evictions.

### *Factors leading farmworker evictions*

According to Wegerif et al (2005) evictions were mainly due farm dwellers’ employment (or that of their family member’s) being terminated. Of those evicted, 31% of employed farm dwellers were fired, whereas 28% of farm dwellers were evicted because the main breadwinner in their household had died; a further 30% of farm dwellers were evicted because the farm was either sold or liquidated. De Satgé and Blecher (2015) found an even higher correlation between evictions and farm ownership being transferred; they found that on Boland farms, 72% of those evicted were evicted during a transfer of ownership.

Wegerif et al. (2005) found that farm consolidation processes, which involved buying of farms, could be associated with evictions. Two third of evictions in the survey happened on relatively smaller farms, with a labour force of less than 50 workers. The peak evictions periods, were seemingly triggered by adverse weather conditions and regulatory changes Wegerif et al. (2005). These were in:

- 1984 and 1992, after severe droughts that put farmers under extreme economic pressure;
- 1996–1997, corresponding to the introduction of ESTA; and
- 2003, when Sectoral Determination 13 (DoL 2003), the law that regulates farmworkers’ working conditions, was promulgated and stipulated a minimum wage.

<sup>16</sup> Wegerif et al. (2005) interviewed 355 evictee households out of a sample 7759 households.

<sup>17</sup> Wegerif et al. (2005) argued that this anomaly might have been due to mistakes in StatsSA’s classification of enumerator areas, and therefore in overall figures (Todes et al. 2010).

Significantly, Wegerif et al.'s (2005) study seems to indicate that worker evictions did not happen haphazardly, but that labour needs, especially the need for skilled labour, were taken into account. Of the adults evicted, 39% were educated only up to Standard 5, while 34% had no education at all. Only 8% of evicted adults passed Grade 11 or 12. Of these evicted farm dwellers, only 32% remained in rural areas; the rest moved to formal and informal urban areas (Wegerif et al. 2005). Most of those evicted therefore seem to be lost to the agricultural labour market.

## Working conditions

### Compliance with legislation

Studies gauging whether working conditions improved after labour legislation was extended to the sector have not always reached the same conclusions. Kritzinger et al. (2004, citing Kritzinger&Vorster 2001) argue that by the late 1990s (when farmworkers were already protected by both the BCEA and LRA) on-farm employment of women had hugely improved, based on basic conditions of employment such as paid sick leave, holiday leave and paid maternity leave. However, Greenberg (2003), possibly commenting just before SD13 was passed, notes that farmworkers' employment contracts were 'more of a legal formality than a truly legal agreement'. He found significant variation in compliance, with seasonal workers' often granted less rights, with working hours of 27–65 hours a week (the legal number of ordinary hours per week is 45 hours). While most (but not all) permanent workers indicated that they had paid sick leave, maternity leave, family responsibility leave, and annual leave, a number of seasonal workers said they did not get any type of leave. At the time, Greenberg (2003) blamed the Department of Labour's poor enforcement for a general failure to ensure more significant improvements in working conditions.

### Impact of private standards on working conditions

Some studies have gauged whether retailer-enforced private standards have improved working conditions, with little impact reported on Western Cape farms before 2005 (i.e. Greenberg 2003; Kritzinger et al. 2004; Barrientos et al. 2004; Barrientos&Smith 2007). However, before 2005 monitoring of private standards was still quite new (Barrientos & Visser, 2012). At first, private certification schemes for agriculture, such as EuropGap (later GlobalGap) focussed mostly on compliance with health and safety legislation. By 2003, all South African fruit farmers exporting to Europe had to be EuropGap accredited (Greenberg 2003). However, the 'welfare' section in EuropGap that dealt with worker health, safety and welfare was fairly small (Greenberg 2003). Farmers at the time said all codes, including retailer codes (such as Tesco's Nature's Choice, as it was referred to then) were largely technical and focused on environmental and food safety standards, with worker welfare and labour conditions rarely discussed (Greenberg 2003). Welfare codes in EuropGap at the time were also 'minor musts', while most other codes were 'major musts', which, when not met, involved EuropGap withdrawing certification (Greenberg 2003). Similarly, Barrientos and Smith (2007) found that the main improvements in working conditions of South African farmworkers related to health and safety.

Since 2007 however, several studies have found fairly good compliance with minimum labour standards (many studies specifically checked compliance with the minimum wage) (Theron 2009; Theron&Visser 2012; Barrientos&Visser 2012; Visser&Ferrer 2015; Alford 2015; Greenberg et al. 2012). It is unlikely that such improvements are due to more rigorous inspections by the Department of Labour, which is still under-resourced (Benjamin 2010; 2011). The compliance is more than likely due to more persistent monitoring of private standards by retailers in the Western Cape from 2007 onwards. Seven years later, Visser and Ferrer (2015) found that on farms regularly subjected to auditing, there were higher rates of compliance with health and safety, and other labour legislation. The higher compliance rates are likely because failing an audit by private standard setters could lead to supply chains being cut, while failing a Department of Labour inspection only resulted in a fine (Visser&Ferrer 2015).



However, the ability of private standards to improve (1) the working conditions of *all* workers, especially seasonal and contract workers, and (2) working conditions beyond the legal minima has been questioned (Barrientos&Kritzinger 2004; Theron&Visser 2012; Visser&Ferrer 2015). After private audits, Alford (2015: 142) and Barrientos and Visser (2012: 34) found that on-farm housing for seasonal workers had improved, albeit from a very low base, as such on-farm housing has historically been very poor quality (Barrientos&Barrientos 2002; Visser&Ferrer 2015).

The main criticism of private codes is that they fail to identify violations of enabling rights, such as the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining. Moreover, since 2007 they have not lifted the minimum wage to the level of a living wage. Current agricultural minimum wages are still insufficient to feed an average four-person household (Meyer et al. 2012). A related criticism is that private standard setters have remained silent about power imbalances in the value chain that have led to low farm gate prices, which in turn makes it difficult for farmers to pay living wages (Du Toit 2001; Barrientos et al. 2004; Barrientos&Smith 2007; Greenberg et al. 2012; Visser&Ferrer 2015).

At this stage, state grants, and workers' own networks and survival instincts still subsidise insufficient agricultural wages. Social security grants and pensions play an important role in keeping households out of dire poverty (Kritzinger et al. 2004, citing Vorster et al. 2000). Grants contribute to food and household security of entire households and often present the only secure or constant source of income (Vorster et al. 2000, cited in Kritzinger et al., 2004). They also found that workers made ends meet by buying food in bulk, buying less food, and buying on credit. The most main survival strategy of workers employed by labour brokers involved borrowing money from relatives, neighbours, foremen, or more often, from the brokers who employ them. Some workers use all these resources to make ends meet. Nevertheless, 70% of respondents in Du Toit's study (2005) indicated that their household had experienced a food shortage at some time during the previous 12 months.<sup>18</sup>

### **An increasingly complex hierarchy of workers**

While there have always been significant differences in the permanent and seasonal workers' employment conditions, Ewert and Du Toit (2005: 317) refer to a "deepening divide" between 'a core of workers who manage to hold on to permanent employment, though often still living on the farm and caught in the web of paternalism' who benefit from better pay and housing versus 'the seasonal, casual and contract workers: a rural lumpen proletariat, often residing in rural, peri-urban or metropolitan shanty towns'.

Yet, it seems that over time this divide has not only intensified, but that the workplace has also become more stratified. Theron (2010: 20) identifies three dividing lines in the workplace: one between on-farm and off-farmworkers; one between permanent and seasonal workers; and one between workers directly employed by the farmer and those employed by a broker. It may also be important to distinguish between workers who are employed by a broker on a permanent basis, and those employed by the broker on a 'casual' basis only. Lastly, Barrientos et al (2004: 117) point to yet a further dividing line: between migrant workers and locals. They found that migrant workers are often found at the lowest end of this employment hierarchy.

Various studies have found evidence of a wage premium for more skilled (permanent) workers, which also points to stratification at the higher end of this hierarchy. At face value this premium seems to be huge, ranging from 100% to 260% between the lowest and highest wages (Barrientos&Kritzinger 2002; Alford 2015; Barrientos&Visser 2012; Visser&Ferrer 2015). Yet, such premiums are off a very low base. Second, only a very thin layer of permanent workers at the top end of this hierarchy seem to benefit from significantly higher wages. In their sample of Western Cape farms – where workers were generally paid the highest wages – Visser & Ferrer (2015) found

<sup>18</sup> In Du Toit's (2005) sample, 40% of household members with access to paid work were reported to have spent some time doing wage labour in the agricultural sector, but only 32% indicated that they worked on commercial farms.

that most permanent workers earned only about 16% more than the minimum wage. Moreover, they found that only a small fraction of permanent workers earned what Cosatu would begin to define as a living wage. The fact that this fraction was so small could have been influenced by farmers' need to adjust to the 52% increase in the minimum wage in March 2013. Given that Visser & Ferrer's study was conducted a year after the increase, producers did not have much time to absorb it and as result probably gave smaller increases to more skilled workers who would normally be paid a significant wage premium. As farmers absorb the new minimum wages, the size and the number of permanent workers who benefit from such wage premiums may grow again.

### Gender stereotypes in the workplace

Apart from migrant workers, it has been noted that female workers tend to be found at the bottom of the hierarchy. Several studies found that women comprise the bulk of seasonal and contract workers, so often have less job security. They earn lower wages and have less opportunity for career advancement because gender stereotypes relegate them to low(er) skilled positions. They also receive fewer benefits than men and have worse conditions of employment. Moreover, their tenure security and access to housing are worse than those of their male counterparts, because housing is often reserved for permanent male workers and women only get access to housing via their relationship with men. If women are able to squeeze their way into higher job grades, within those grades they still tend to be worse off than men (Barrientos&Barrientos, 2002; Greenberg 2003; Barrientos et al 2004; Ewert&Du Toit 2005; Wegerif et al. 2005; Greenberg et al. 2012).

However, some gender stereotypes favour farm women.<sup>19</sup> Functional upgrading of producers in the value chain has resulted in building more pack houses. Process and product upgrading have also resulted in the need to pack fruit to various specifications, under strict food safety standards. Given the stereotype that women are more "nimble-fingered" and that they pay more attention to detail, most pack house work is performed by women. More skilled (better paid) packers are needed to pack to a range of specifications, and the need to ensure high quality produce, food safety and product traceability has led to various higher paid positions being created, such as quality controllers and record keepers (Barrientos&Visser 2012). However, because pack houses can be mechanised, pack house women, especially sorters, are now in a vulnerable position.

In orchards/vineyards, a small group of women have benefited from process upgrading, once again due to the need for better quality control measures and record keeping. Given the stereotypes that women are good at secretarial work, these positions – which are also less physically demanding – are often given to women. Clerical positions are better paid than field work, and offer more opportunities for training in transferable skills such as record keeping, data capturing, computer work, and managing payroll software (Kritzinger&Vorster 1995; Barrientos&Kritzinger 2004, cited in Barrientos&Visser 2012; Greenberg et al. 2012; Barrientos&Visser 2012).

On-farm women – often the partners of permanent men – are starting to be more regularly employed in permanent positions (Theron 2009; Barrientos&Visser 2012). The driver of this trend is not discussed in the literature and should be further explored. It could be that farmers want to optimise the labour of farm residents and employing resident women on a permanent basis ensures their availability throughout the year. Women benefit from the situation in that they have longer employment, more job security, and potentially more benefits. The advantage of appointing women on a permanent basis from a farmer's perspective is that it obviates the need to build more housing to accommodate (new) permanent male workers and their families.

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<sup>19</sup> Functional upgrading refers to the process where producers in the change value chain take on new functions, e.g. in the case of agriculture, if a farmer no longer just produces fruit, but also packs, exports and distributes his own fruit. Process upgrading transforms inputs into outputs more efficiently by reorganising the production system or introducing superior technology (Gereffi&Fernandez-Stark 2011).

However, women in the workplace continue to be exposed to threats, aside from the loss of job opportunities due to pack house mechanisation. The influx of migrants is affecting the gender composition of the temporary (mostly female) workforce, with more males working in temporary positions than in the past (Theron 2009; Greenberg 2003). This shift might be because employment equity legislation means that men and women in the same position should be paid the same wage (Greenberg 2003).<sup>20</sup> Several farmers argued that ‘given the same wage rate for men and women, they would prefer men to work in the fields’, as they are usually physically stronger and therefore can do a wider range of work (Greenberg 2003: 12). The finding of changed gender demographics in the workplace is however tentative.

## Shifting paternalism

Ewert and Du Toit (2005: 324) argue that after 1994:

*[a] paternalist state has stepped in to push back the paternalist authority of the farmer and has created new limits to farmers’ control over workers’ lives. These changes seriously challenge the legal and formal underpinnings of traditional farm paternalism.*

In the absence of effective organisation that enables collective bargaining, farmworkers are dependent on the largesse of the state; the paternalistic state has, in effect, displaced the paternalistic farmer (Theron 2009). But, far from being destroyed by the pressures on agriculture, paternalism has ‘simply modified and adapted itself over time’ (Du Toit&Ally 2003: 3; 22; 50). Increasingly, the paternalist relationship is used not to tie a large pool of cheap and readily available labour to the farm, but to secure the loyalty of a much smaller population of skilled, relatively privileged, mostly Coloured workers (Du Toit&Ally 2003). However, in typical paternalist fashion, such loyalty is not bought with higher wages, but rather with non-wage benefits, including giving permanent workers access to a provident fund or funeral fund, on-farm housing, subsidised energy bills; access to crèches and vegetable gardens; and providing an on-farm clinics (Visser&Ferrer 2015). The value of such contributions should not be underestimated; one fruit producer calculated that the additional non-wage benefits are a 35% top up of the standard wage packet (Alford 2015). (Kritzinger et al.’s (2004) estimate was slightly lower at 30%. From a producer’s perspective, it makes sense to pay on-farmworkers lower wages and extend non-monetary benefits that bind workers to the farm and ensure their continued employment.

While the strategy of providing non-wage benefits seems similar to 1976 efforts to retain labour at a time of labour scarcity, the current aim is not just to retain labour *per se*, but to retain a *skilled, loyal, and permanent* labour force that knows the farm set-up and its business. Importantly, this layer of permanent on-farmworkers also form a buffer between management and a much larger pool of seemingly disaffected off-farm, temporary workers. The permanent workers become the farmers “eyes and ears” to identify threats to the farmer’s business interests, but – in the light of farm attacks – also to the physical safety of his family. The type of benefits provided to such permanent workers also point to the changed function of paternalism. Instead of 1976 strategy of providing “dop” to psychologically enslave workers, today farmers are more likely to send alcoholic permanent workers for rehabilitation and arrange a social worker to assist their families. It is no longer in the interest of the farmer to have alcoholics on the farm. Although such alcoholics are a legacy of the dop system, they are also often the first to be retrenched.

Permanent workers also benefit from a range of training programmes, aimed at “upliftment”. Some programmes have a serious paternalist bent and invariably aim to teach workers life skills – specifically to help them stop drinking. But other programmes are more useful, including skills such as debt management and basic health care skills. A thin layer of workers also benefit from transferable skills, such as training in management and administrative support.

<sup>20</sup> The Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 prohibits unequal pay for equal work.

In contrast to the perpetuation of paternalist relationships between producers and their on-farm, permanent workers, off-farmworkers are 'far from being "part of the farm", [off-farm] workers will find that the relationships between them and employers will tend to be limited to cash payments for particular tasks' (Du Toit&Ally 2003: 46). While piece work – the epitome of "cash payments for particular tasks" – is nothing new, more novel is the extension of piece work to an ever broader range of tasks, especially after the minimum wage increase in March 2013. Piece work is also more closely monitored to root out non-performing staff (Barrientos&Visser 2012; Visser&Ferrer 2015). While it has been claimed that workers can earn significantly higher wages doing piece work (Theron 2009: 16; Graaff 1976; Visser&Barrientos 2012), such work carries risks (Du Toit&Ally 2003). For instance, when work is stopped due to adverse weather conditions, workers may go for days without pay.

However, because of process and functional upgrading in value chains, producers are starting to recognise the limits of a mercenary, arms-length relationship with off-farm, seasonal workers (Barrientos&Visser 2012; Visser&Ferrer 2015). Although there is a

*... high churn of seasonal workers ...[yet also a]... constant demand to produce bigger volumes of fruit of higher quality... [and that t]he need to attract and retain a more skilled and educated workforce at every level is not facilitated by the use of casualised workers on minimum legal wages and conditions ... [t]he horticulture industry is thus facing a double edged sword. While growers downsize their permanent workforce in favour of seasonal workers, they increasingly need more skilled and educated workers...*

*Source: Barrientos and Visser (2012: 22).*

In the deciduous fruit industry – where there is a greater need for more skilled seasonal workers (as incorrect pruning and manipulation of plants can critically affect yields and quality) – producers needed to retain a stable seasonal workforce because of increasing quality and process standards enforced by supermarkets (Visser&Ferrer 2015). "Perma-temps" are becoming more common, i.e. 'workers who return regularly despite not having any long-term legal guarantee that they will be employed' (Du Toit&Ally 2003: 15). In the fruit industry, high retention rates of seasonal labour are not entirely new; in De Doorns:

*... it would appear that farmers maintain the same agents for a long period of time, a reliable agent being regarded as a most valuable asset. He also noted that a large proportion of the seasonal workforce provided by agents (ranging from a "solid core" to as much as 80%) returned to the same farm annually.*

*Source: Levy (1976: 35).*

On Western Cape fruit farms, and Levubu's (Limpopo) tropical fruit farms, retention rates for seasonal workers were found to be 50%–80% (Visser&Ferrer 2015). Oddly enough, despite a fairly low need for skilled workers and the perceived unattractiveness of the work, the sugar industry had the highest retention rates of seasonal workers (Visser&Ferrer 2015). An obvious interpretation of high retention rates is that seasonal workers are desperate for work and return to the same jobs on annually because of a lack of choice. Another interpretation could be that both farmers and workers benefit from a high retention rate as it reduces the transaction costs for both parties: it saves workers the effort of finding new work and farmers the effort of finding workers that need to be newly-trained. Visser and Ferrer (2015) argue that high retention rates to some extent challenge the perception that producers view seasonal workers as easily replaceable. In some cases producers use strategies to actively retain seasonal workers, for example in Visser and Ferrer's (2015) sample, one producer was paying his seasonal workers more than the regional average and paid his Namibian seasonal workers a retainer out of season. Another provided a fully-equipped canteen for seasonal workers, and a pack house operator planned to give his female packers a share in his pack house to retain their skills. Another major pack house company found temporary work for their packers elsewhere when the pack house burned down and re-employed them once the pack house was rebuilt (Barrientos&Visser 2012).

In an attempt to retain seasonal workers, some producers 'shared' a team of seasonal workers with other producers who grew counter-seasonal crops so as to provide seasonal workers with employment for most of the year. All the producers in Barrientos and Visser's (2012) study complained about a shortage of reliable labour, and sometimes simply about a lack of labour. The issue of a lack of labour was surprising given the prevailing belief that unemployment is rife in rural areas and that most people would jump at a job opportunity. Given the demand for a returning, loyal core of seasonal workers, the implication is that seasonal workers' structural position is not quite as weak as previously assumed.

## Disaggregating the causes of the various pressures

How and if the drivers of restructuring correlate with specific consequences, is much debated in the literature. Different authors highlight different drivers, while some argue that all of these contribute to a range of consequences.

Newman et al (1997, cited in Du Toit&Ally 2003) and Bhorat et al. (2012) argue that extending labour regulation to the sector, specifically introducing a minimum wage, has resulted in job loss. The effect of a regulated minimum wage becomes particularly stark after the 52% hike in the minimum wage in March 2013. However, the March increase was exceptional and should be viewed as a correction to previous, insufficient increases. Even so, from 2012 to 2013, the nominal cost of labour per carton for the production of apples and pears, respectively rose by 60% for pears and 68% for apples (Visser&Ferrer 2015). In Limpopo and Mpumalanga, which demonstrated strong growth in on-farm employment from 2011 to 2012, there was a decline in on-farm employment after the March 2013 increase in minimum wages (Visser&Ferrer 2015).

The *absence* of legislation, specifically legislation that would give more protection to non-permanent workers, could arguably have driven casualisation and externalisation (Du Toit 2001; Barrientos&Barrientos 2002; Greenberg 2003; Du Toit&Ally 2003; Kritzing et al. 2004; Theron 2009). Because non-permanent workers enjoy less legislative protection, legislation effectively encouraged farmers to employ non-permanent workers as they provide farmers with more flexibility (*ibid*). Seasonal workers can, for instance, be paid on an hourly basis passing on the risk to the worker in case of work stoppage as a result of bad weather. Lack of clarity about some of the stipulations of SD13 leaves room for interpretation, thus disadvantaging workers. For instance, some farmers argue that seasonal workers are only entitled to leave once they have worked for more than four months continuously for the same employer, instead of being entitled to leave on a pro rata basis.

Furthermore, by recognising labour brokers as the employer of workers provided to clients, labour legislation has created legal space so that the real employer (the client) needs to restructure and externalise the employment relationship (Theron 2009). No special concessions exist to accommodate the consequences of agricultural labour broking in the sectoral determination (Theron 2009).

Instead of blaming labour legislation for job losses and casualisation, Theron et al. (2007, citing DFID Southern Africa 2003) argue that the main driver of job losses, externalisation and casualisation is trade liberalisation, not labour legislation. Employment in agriculture fell by 32% from 1993 to 2001, even *before* SD13 was promulgated in 2003, but *within* the period in which trade liberalisation was affected (Theron et al. 2007). The minimum wage was decidedly modest and, in certain areas, would probably not have even been an increase (Theron et al. 2007). They therefore question the extent to which introducing the minimum wage would have increased producers' labour costs.

Closer integration into global value chains would have had an adverse effect on labour (Bolwig et al 2010, citing Hughes, 2001 and Tallontire et al. 2005; Greenberg et al 2012). Higher labour and environmental sustainability standards are difficult to achieve 'if grape growers and

wineries, and even importers have very thin margins' (Greenberg et al 2012: 59). The terms of trade between retailers and suppliers in large retailer-driven value chains are intimately connected to working conditions at production sites, having greater or less direct effects on conditions, including a lack of job security, low wages, pressure to work overtime, and employment of many temporary workers:

*[L]abour conditions at sites of export production cannot be treated as hermetically sealed economic environments separate from the dynamics of the value chains that strongly shape them.*

*Source: Bolwig et al. (2010: 182, citing Hughes, 2001 and Tallontire et al. 2005)*

However, some employment data seems to suggest that employment losses happened well before any of the identified pressures were introduced, i.e. before the extension of labour legislation, the promulgation of ESTA or trade liberalisation. In 1994 alone – well before the ANC government introduced any new legislation – there was a 19% decline in the number of permanent jobs. In the wine industry, the peak period of mechanisation seems to have occurred from 1995 to 1997 – before changes in the regulatory environment (Visser&Ferrer 2015). Did farmers' expectations about the future drive them to pro-actively cut labour costs?

Changes in employment practices should be ascribed to producer agency, not just changes in the regulatory and trade environment (Simbi & Aliber 2000, cited in du Toit 2001; du Toit&Ally 2003; Ewert&Du Toit 2005). Farmers' anger at state withdrawal and 'interference' in their businesses by the promulgation of legislation, has led to a backlash by farmers that contributed to the rate of job shedding, casualisation and externalisation (Simbi&Aliber 2000, cited in Du Toit&Ally 2001; Du Toit&Ally 2003; Ewert&Du Toit 2005). Bitterness in many farmers' observations is 'too strident to be dismissed' (Du Toit&Ally 2003: 46).

Du Toit and Ally (2003: 46) comment that '[c]learly, what is happening in the rural Western Cape is not only the outcome of the pressure of economic realities, but also the renegotiation of ideological and cultural frameworks that legitimised social and power labour relations on these farms in previous decades'. This bitterness, rather than economic pressures, unleashed a farmers' "backlash" against the 52% wage increase in March 2013. After the wage increase, farmers withdrew permanent on-farm workers' benefits, retrenched permanent workers, while demoting some to seasonal workers, and also stepped up work intensification (Visser&Ferrer 2015). If the "backlash" was indeed driven by anger, it must have been tempered by an economic imperative to retain a loyal (permanent and skilled) workforce. Post March-2013 most producers continued to provide free on-farm housing and a range of benefits to on-farm permanent workers, suggesting that claims of a backlash against permanent workers were exaggerated (Visser&Ferrer 2015; Alford 2015; (de Satgé&Blecher 2015). More likely, seasonal off-farmworkers would have been the main casualties of such a backlash.

As to farmers' perceptions of the drivers of change, du Toit & Ally (2003: 20) found that the most important factors influencing farmers' decisions were socio-economic factors (cost and price), closely followed by legislation. Economic pressures on farmers were the main cause of evictions (Wegerif et al. 2005).

Ultimately it is very difficult – if not impossible – to disaggregate what drives labour restructuring. Whatever the main drivers, 40 years later, farmworkers – much more than the previous generation – have to contend with casualisation, externalisation, the increased use of off-farmworkers, and evictions.

## 4. CONCLUSION

This paper focuses on a review of the literature on employment conditions and the structural factors that impact on such conditions in the labour-intensive fruit sector as well as the wine sector of the Western Cape. The paper focused on fresh fruit subsector as it is the agricultural subsector that contributes most to sectoral Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employment. While the review mostly covered papers, dealing with employment and written in the last fifteen years – mainly on Western Cape fruit and wine farms – other seminal papers on agricultural employment in South Africa were also included. The review also compared the findings on labour practices and conditions on farms between 1976 and 2000–2015, with the aim of investigating the impact of changed public and private regulation on farmworkers' working conditions, but especially to reveal the critical role of state policy in improving (or not improving) worker conditions.

From a rights perspective, farmworkers are clearly much better off today than they were 40 years ago. Labour legislation has been extended to the sector, and farmworkers now also enjoy social protection as a result of the (1) Unemployment Insurance Fund and the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act 61 of 1997; (2) health and safety protection due to the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993; and (3) protection from discrimination in the workplace, thanks to the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998. To curb the arbitrary eviction of farm dwellers, ESTA was promulgated in 1997. At one level, the state has actively intervened in the sector, putting in place a raft of protective measures to improve farmworkers' livelihoods. This new rights regime has challenged the paternalist authority of farmers over the lives of workers and their families (Ewert&Du Toit 2005). However, subsequent literature reveals the limits of relying on a narrow rights-based approach to improve farmworker conditions. A combination of factors lead to farmworker rights remaining largely unrealised, including: (1) an understaffed inspectorate division within the Department of Labour that fails to effectively monitor and enforce compliance with rights; (2) workers' lack of knowledge about their rights; and (3) low levels of unionisation in the sector (with only about 5% of farmworkers nationally belonging to a union).

Secondly, the macro-economic context in which rights are meant to be realised can facilitate or thwart realisation. In the case of agriculture, especially labour-intensive, export-orientated agriculture, the context has changed dramatically over the past 20 years, in no small measure due to the role of the state. While the state has intervened in farmworkers' lives to give them more protection, it has withdrawn extensive farmer support. In international markets, farmers now enjoy far less protection than they did 40 years ago. In 1976, the global fresh fruit value chain could still be described as a "producer-driven" chain (Gereffi 1994). At the time, the Marketing Act – which allowed state-controlled marketing boards to be created – strengthened producers' hand by effectively forcing them to bargain collectively with international retailers. Moreover, international retailer power was far less consolidated than it is today, so collective producer power gave producers clout in the international market. The state also supported producers through (1) various tariff support measures, (2) financial support (with subsidies and state-financed loans); (3) large scale state-supported research and extension services; and (4) various iterations of the Cooperative Societies Amendment Act 38 of 1925, which enabled producers to buy inputs collectively and build agricultural infrastructure with state funding.

Since 1997, the state's agricultural regulation has however changed significantly. Subsidisation, and sectoral state-supported research and extension services were greatly curtailed, marketing control boards abolishing, and tariff protections phased out. The state's regulatory about-turn happened at a time when international retail increased consolidation, so the global fresh fruit value chain touching down in South Africa changed from being producer-driven to buyer-driven. Most importantly, enforced collective bargaining by the state fell away, so producers now have to bargain with increasingly powerful retailers on an individual basis. Because of this change, fresh

fruit producers increasingly became price takers, which put pressure on their profits. Retailers have applied further pressure on producers by demanding that they comply with a range of private standards, regulating the quality of products and the production processes.

Changes in state policy do not happen in a vacuum, but result from intense contestation by a range of actors (Morris 1976; Williams et al. 1998). In 1948, farmers – a key constituency of the National Party – won this contest, and were afterwards supported by a veritable bulwark of protective measures, propelling them to a strong position until the economic recession of 1985. In 1994, due to the influence of the ANC-aligned LAPC and World Bank influence, farmer support was withdrawn. Binswanger and Deiniger (1993, cited in Williams et al. 1998) argued that this approach would lead to greater efficiencies, and also reduce the privileges which the state conferred on large scale white-farmers, levelling the playing fields on which black farmers would have to compete with them. However, the world had changed since the 1950s – especially the globalisation of international retail markets – and this was probably not significantly enough factored into policy making at the time. This policy change would eventually have serious repercussions for farmworkers.

Increasingly, while the state has the capacity to regulate the national sphere in which producers and farmworkers carve out their livelihoods, international retailers have supranational regulatory powers. Importantly, retailer power enables them to privately regulate the national sphere (the jurisdiction of the state), and the international sphere – where the state has little, or even no effective power. While retailer power sometimes reinforces country legislation, such as when private social standards demand that farmers have to comply with a country's labour legislation, it also has the capacity to erode the working conditions of farmworkers, in that retailers pass financial risk on to producers who, in turn, pass down such risk to their workers.

Taking a more global view, changes in value chain governance are linked to increasingly adverse incorporation of South African farmworkers into the global fresh fruit value chain (Du Toit 2001; Mather&Greenberg 2003; Barrientos et al. 2004; Du Toit 2005; Ewert&Du Toit 2005; Greenberg 2003; 2012; Barrientos&Visser 2012). State regulatory changes, along with international retail consolidation, have increasingly put producers on the back foot, driving them to restructure their labour force (the main cost component of their business).

Restructuring the labour forces has entailed three major strategies: casualisation, externalisation and the growing trend of sourcing workers from off-farm communities, frequently from rural townships. While the growth of such townships has been linked mainly to farmworker evictions from farms (exacerbated by the ESTA stipulations, which aim to give farm dwellers more tenure security), apart from Wegerif et al.'s (2005) study, there is little concrete evidence suggesting that rural township growth should primarily be ascribed to evictions.

It is, however, clear that the combination of externalisation, casualisation and the trend to source workers from off-farm has greatly eroded the potential of a rights-based regime to improve farmworkers' lives. By shifting workers into a sphere that cannot easily be reached by the fairly short arm of labour law and security of tenure regulation, the need to comply with such legislation has in effect been circumvented. While the ability of labour legislation to regulate agricultural working relations is not the subject of this paper, casualisation – even more than externalisation – has certainly put labour legislation out of step with employment relations in the fruit sector, as labour law has mainly been written with permanent workers in mind. Most fruit sector workers are now employed as temporary workers, with the effect that current legislation does not provide them with sufficient protection. Since farmworkers are increasingly living off-farm, ESTA provisions are also irrelevant to such workers.



An inherent tension between different regulatory pressures – especially between different strands of private regulation – has been noted by several researchers. Having to meet ever more rigorous private standards, while also having to cope with retailer pressure on profit margins, has driven producers to adopt an increasingly differentiated approach to managing their labour. Initially, the differentiation was described as a split between a well-looked after core of permanent workers who access a range of benefits, and a growing pool of temporary workers who toil under minimum working conditions (Du Toit&Ally 2003).

However, instead of a binary split, it may be more apt to talk about a workplace hierarchy, split along various lines, for example in terms of tenure (permanent or temporary), but also along the lines of those (1) living on-farm or off-farm; (2) being directly employed or via a labour broker; (3) being a migrant or a local; and (4) being an internal versus an external migrant (Barrientos&Barrientos 2002; Barrientos et al. 2004; Barrientos&Kritzinger 2004; Theron 2012; Alford 2015).

Certain types of workers – often women, contract workers, and migrants – are consistently at the bottom of the hierarchy (Barrientos&Barrientos 2002; Greenberg 2003; Barrientos et al. 2004; du Toit&Evert 2005; Wegerif et al. 2005; Greenberg et al. 2012). The different categories of farmworkers, in effect, give producers a range of flexible labour options. While the situation clearly benefits producers, it is unclear what the various categories of workers imply for labour. But it does not bode well.

However, there is some light on this dark horizon of change. Although moving off-farm resulted in most farmworkers now living in arguably worse housing conditions than those of on-farm colleagues, the move means off-farm workers are less beholden to paternalist employers and they have (theoretically at least) improved access to a range of government services. Living in townships has also reduced previous isolation, allowing new forms of farmworker organisation to sprout up, as was seen in the De Doorns 2012 strike (Wilderman 2015).

Despite legislative changes implemented and the protest action of November 2012, however, when farmworkers' conditions today are compared with those in 1976, workers do not seem to be significantly better off. In fact, they might be worse off. Most farmworkers now have less job security and seemingly live in more dire housing conditions compared to the previous generation of fruit farmworkers in the Western Cape.

Although based on the small samples provided by Theron (1976) and Graaff (1976) and using only their wage package as a yardstick, it would appear as if the average worker in Theron and Graaff's samples was better off than a worker who would only receive the minimum wage today. Meyer et al's (2012) finding that a wage of R150 per day is not able to sustain a household of four to nutritionally acceptable levels, further underscores the fact that labour legislation alone has failed to lift workers out of dire poverty, even when such legislation provides for the government to set a minimum wage.

Du Toit (2001: 9) has argued that a contradiction in the state's policy – withdrawing regulatory support to producers, while extending regulatory support to workers – is partially to blame for this state of affairs. While the question at this stage is theoretical, one cannot help but wonder: if the state had maintained regulatory support for producers in the face of increasing retailer consolidation, but simultaneously extended its raft of protective legislation to farmworkers, may farmworkers not have been better off?

## 5. THE GAPS

While this review points to some clear trends, highlighted by the gamut of studies, it also found some remaining knowledge gaps about employment in the sector. These are outlined below.

### The impact of other producer strategies on labour restructuring

While labour restructuring has been a key producer response to the triple transition, producers have also implemented other strategies to challenge – or at least mitigate – the effects of the power imbalance between themselves and international retailers. Much less is known about the effect these other responses on producers' labour strategies. Such responses can for instance include (1) product expansion and diversification; (2) product and process upgrading, but also (3) “downgrading”, or redirecting some volumes to the local market, which seemingly has lower and less standards, or, (4) in the case of the wine industry, to switch to exporting bulk wine (Barrientos&Visser 2012; Ponte&Ewert 2009). A range of questions arise when entertaining these other strategies. To what extent has such expansion led to the need for more labour? Or did economies of scale obviate the need for more labour? Are farmworker conditions better or worse on big, consolidated farms, well integrated into global supply chains than on smaller farms supplying mostly the local market (which has implications for land reform)?

### The effect of private standards on labour

Most studies that purposefully set out to gauge the impact of private standards were undertaken before 2007, i.e. before international retailers enforced private social standards on Western Cape fruit and wine farms (e.g. du Toit 2001; Barrientos&Barrientos 2002; Barrientos et al. 2004; Barrientos&Smith 2007). As a result, the authors of these studies conclude that private standards have little impact on farmworkers' working and living conditions, and the only positive impacts relate to workplace health and safety improvements. In terms of strengthening enabling rights, such as the right to freedom of association, very little impact is observed. More recently though, Visser and Ferrer (2015) found that farms that which ethical trade auditors monitored regularly, were more compliant with health and safety *and labour legislation* than those who were not subjected to audits. Moreover, Alford (2015) found a shift away from labour brokering among farmers in the Ceres area. To what extent can such changes indeed be ascribed to more rigorous enforcement of private social standards?

### Coordinating off-farm labour

The shift towards a temporary, off-farm workforce has created the need to better coordinate labour. Existing literature suggests that labour brokers have largely facilitated coordination, leading to more externalisation. Yet, this review found that claims of increased externalisation are based on fairly thin evidence. A scan of the literature about externalisation in the Western Cape did not reveal many studies specifically focussing on externalisation. Studies that have adopted a (more) purposeful focus include those of du Toit and Ally (2003); Barrientos and Kritzing (2004); Visser and Ferrer (2014) and to a lesser extent, given its small sample, Theron (2010). A more comprehensive study to measure the extent of externalisation, the different forms it takes and to gauge whether the incidence thereof has changed over time therefore seems overdue especially in the light of Alford's (2015) study which suggests that farmers in some areas may be switching to employing workers directly.

Moreover, while the use of labour brokers may be declining, does it mean that farmers have phased out intermediaries, or just that they are not using them? If farmers are using new types of intermediaries, who are they? Do they have the same, less, or possibly more scope to exploit farmworkers?

## The impact of migration on labour demand

Both Levy (1976) and Graaff (1976) reported a scarcity of cheap labour in the Western Cape in 1976 with Levy (1976) arguing that such scarcity increased the reserve wages of Coloured farmworkers in the province at the time. It is not clear from more recent literature whether farmers are operating in an environment of labour abundance or labour scarcity. In particular, no studies have investigated the impact of in-migration on agricultural labour restructuring in the Western Cape after influx control was abolished and the country democratised.

Bekker (2002: 26) reports high migration levels from the Eastern Cape to the Western Cape from 1995 to 1998. Did some migrants also move to rural areas in the Western Cape? If they did, they would have arrived at a time when farmers, responding to the “triple transition”, began restructuring their labour forces. Migrant arrival would have aggravated the structural position of newly casualised and externalised workers. Conversely, in-migration would have given farmers a bigger army of cheap labour, thereby further decreasing workers’ reserve wages.

On the other hand, if there was less in-migration to the rural Western Cape than imagined, but significant out-migration of Coloured workers (the traditional farmworkers on Western Cape farms) the effects of labour restructuring would have been less pronounced. While it is unlikely that a situation of labour scarcity had ever occurred – gauged by persistent low wages paid to farmworkers – it is interesting that farmers consistently complained about a lack of labour during peak periods (Visser&Ferrer 2015). How do producers retain workers in the face of a possible shortage in peak periods, which seem to be getting ever longer?

While a lot is known about the working conditions of permanent workers, this review found limited discussion about the working conditions of non-permanent workers. Where literature does deal with the topic, discussion is based on very small samples. Moreover, serious knowledge gaps within the topic include that very little is known about the average income of workers who do piece work and what strategies farmers implement to retain seasonal workers.

## The implications of a range of worker sources

While different sources of temporary workers now exist (e.g. on-farm temporary workers; on-farm migrant workers; off-farm migrant and local workers; contract workers) there is little discussion about if and how farmers make use of these various sources of labour. What are farmers’ preferred sources of labour and what the implications of their choices for the wider worker community? It has for instance been argued that a) rivalry between Zimbabwean and local labour brokers and b) farmers’ alleged preference for Zimbabwean workers have contributed to xenophobic conflict flaring up in De Doorns in 2009 (Misago, 2009; Robb, 2009). Both Theron (2012) and Greenberg et al (2012) hint that the traditional gender profile of the workplace might be changing. Greenberg et al (2012) suggest that female temporary labour might be displaced by migrants, while Theron suggests that female workers now have access to more permanent job opportunities. More research is needed to test these findings, but also to explore other impacts of migration on labour restructuring in the agricultural sector.

## Worker agency in migrating labour restructuring

To the extent that worker responses to labour restructuring in the agricultural sector are discussed, the focus tends to be on collective responses and mostly those of unions. Apart from Du Toit’s study (2005), which explores the survival strategies of people living in the townships of Ceres, the individual agency of workers to mitigate the pressure caused by the triple transition in their lives has received little attention. Visser and Ferrer’s study (2015) suggest that many of those living in off-farm communities are ex-farmworkers now making a living by servicing farmworkers. Moreover, nascent findings on the incidence of circular migration

suggest that migrating farmworkers may have more employment options than workers permanently located on-farms (Theron 2012). Yet, it can also be expected that the potential benefits of migration will have some serious trade-offs, such as the loss of a family life. Overall, the strategies that workers employ to survive, given their seemingly unsustainable wages and decreasing work security, are underexplored.

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