

Land reform should go back to the drawing board – PLAAS

By Julinda Schroeder June 15, 2018 8:20 am

The current land reform process should be placed on hold and a new process started with the goal of preparing a new White Paper on land reform, which would set out new guiding policies and legislation, according to Prof Ben Cousins of the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies at the University of the Western Cape.



Share 0

Tweet 2

Share 0

Print 0

Email 0

The current land reform process should be placed on hold and a new process started with the goal of preparing a new White Paper on land reform, which would set out new guiding policies and legislation, according to Prof Ben Cousins of the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) at the University of the Western Cape.

There had been much debate about how to acquire land, but not what to do with it once it had been acquired.

It was more important for the debate to centre on who should get the land and what should be done with it, while securing the rights of beneficiaries and supporting them, he said.

In addition, a greater portion of the country's national budget should be devoted to land reform instead of the current 0,4, Cousins added.

He said that currently there was only a vague sense that things must change, but there was no clarity on what was supposed to be achieved with land reform.

A huge problem was that there was no cohesion between government and the agricultural sector in the land reform programme.

Government needed the buy-in from the agricultural sector but both the department of agriculture and organised agriculture operated in silos when it came to land reform, Cousins explained.

Most stakeholders were looking at farming through the lens of old-school commercial farmers, which was deeply misleading.

"Farming systems exist along a spectrum of scales and farming types. "We need to understand them differently and support them differently."

Post-settlement support had therefore been largely inappropriate, as what had been designed for these farmers was not suitable for their purposes. This had been exacerbated by a lack of reliable data on smallholder farmers.

With regard to title deeds, Cousins said giving people title deeds was not the answer for everyone.

"There are powerful arguments that for poor people title deeds are expensive, cumbersome and do not work."

Other ways to provide security of tenure had to be found, especially in the communal areas. Therefore an expanded vision of a title deed was necessary, and it was important to provide an equivalent of a title deed to provide social tenure, he said.

