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# Over three decades of land distribution in South Africa: a review of progress, challenges and prospects

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South Africa's land reform program, initiated in 1994, has unfolded over more than three decades (1994–2025) and remains a central pillar of post-apartheid transformation. Despite sustained political commitment, land redistribution continues to generate intense debate regarding its pace, equity, and developmental impact. This review examines the trajectory of land redistribution within the broader land reform framework, assessing progress against the objectives articulated in the 1997 White Paper on Land Policy and subsequent policy reforms. The study adopts a narrative review approach, synthesizing academic literature, government reports, parliamentary committee records, and policy evaluations published between 1994 and 2025. Key sources include empirical studies, program evaluations, and official data relating to restitution, redistribution, and tenure reform, with particular attention to major policy instruments such as SLAG, LRAD, PLAS, and FALA. The review finds that while millions of hectares have been redistributed and significant institutional milestones achieved, outcomes remain uneven. Persistent challenges include bureaucratic delays, elite capture, under-resourced post-settlement support, gender and youth exclusion, weak institutional capacity, and continued reliance on market-led acquisition models. Nevertheless, the analysis identifies "islands of success" where participatory governance, targeted beneficiary selection, coordinated post-settlement support, and digital land information systems have improved productivity and livelihoods. This paper contributes to the literature by providing a consolidated, long-term assessment of South Africa's land redistribution experience, bridging empirical evidence and policy analysis across three decades. It advances policy debates by demonstrating that supply-led, gender-responsive, and class-conscious redistribution models (supported by blended financing, agri-hubs, and public-private partnerships) offer viable pathways toward inclusive growth, food security, and spatial justice. The review provides evidence-based insights to support policy recalibration and accelerate progress toward the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 land reform objectives.

KEYWORDS

**land restitution, land redistribution, land reform, post-apartheid transformation, South Africa, land tenure**

# 1 Introduction

In South Africa, as in many former settler colonies, the democratic government inherited a profoundly unequal land ownership structure, with over 80% of agricultural land historically controlled by a white minority (Binswanger and Deininger, 1995; Kloppers and Pienaar, 2014). This inequality was entrenched through colonial and apartheid-era legal frameworks that systematically dispossessed Black South Africans of land and denied them access to productive agricultural assets (Piotrowski, 2019; Sihlangu and Odeku, 2021). Land reform has therefore occupied a central place in South Africa's post-apartheid transformation agenda, not only as a mechanism for redressing historical injustice, but also as a foundation for rural livelihoods, food security, and inclusive economic development. Since 1994, successive governments have pursued a comprehensive land reform program aimed at restitution, redistribution, and tenure security, as articulated in the 1997 White Paper on South African Land Policy and reinforced through subsequent legislative and policy reforms (Maake, 2016).

Over more than three decades (1994–2025), South Africa's land reform program has evolved through a series of policy instruments designed to accelerate redistribution and improve developmental outcomes. Early initiatives such as the Settlement/Land Acquisition Grant (SLAG) sought to facilitate access to land for settlement and subsistence farming but were constrained by limited funding, administrative weaknesses, and inadequate post-settlement support (Mufune, 2010; Jacobs, 2012). Subsequent programs, including Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (LRAD), the Land and Agrarian Reform Project (LARP), Financial Assistance Land (FALA), and the Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy (PLAS), introduced more supply-led and market-oriented mechanisms intended to increase scale and productivity (Van Reenen, 2023). Despite these shifts, outcomes have remained uneven. Persistent challenges (including bureaucratic delays, elite capture, gender and youth exclusion, under-resourced post-settlement support, and institutional capacity gaps) continue to limit the transformative potential of land reform and undermine its contribution to rural development and food security (Walker, 2012; Makhetha, 2024; Molomo and Dube, 2024).

Despite an extensive body of scholarship evaluating individual land reform programs, policy instruments, and case studies, few studies offer a consolidated, longitudinal synthesis of lessons drawn across three decades of implementation. Existing analyses often focus on specific phases, instruments, or outcomes, limiting their ability to inform forward-looking policy recalibration. This review addresses this gap by providing a comprehensive synthesis of South Africa's land redistribution experience between 1994 and 2025. The paper aims to assess progress against stated policy objectives, identify persistent structural and institutional constraints, and distill evidence-based strategies for more inclusive, productive, and sustainable land reform. By integrating empirical studies, government evaluations, and policy analyses, the review contributes to both academic and policy debates and provides insights to support alignment with the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 targets related to land reform, food security, and spatial justice.

# 2 Methodology

This study adopts a narrative review methodology to examine the implementation, achievements, and persistent challenges of South Africa's land redistribution program over more than three decades (1994–2025). A narrative review is appropriate given the multidimensional, historically contingent, and politically contested nature of land reform in South Africa, which spans legal frameworks, evolving policy instruments, institutional arrangements, and diverse socio-economic outcomes that cannot be adequately captured through a narrowly defined systematic review.

The review was guided by three overarching research questions:

(i) What progress has been made toward South Africa's land redistribution targets since 1994?
(ii) What structural, institutional, and socio-economic challenges have persisted across different phases of implementation?
(iii) What lessons from three decades of experience can inform future land reform policy and practice?

These questions provided the analytical framework for the thematic synthesis and structured the organization of findings across restitution, redistribution, tenure reform, and post-settlement support.

Relevant literature was identified through comprehensive searches of academic databases including Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, Sabinet, and Google Scholar. These searches were complemented by official document repositories of government institutions such as the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD), the Land Claims Commission, the Auditor-General of South Africa, and Parliamentary Portfolio Committees.

Search terms included combinations of "land reform South Africa," "land redistribution," "restitution claims," "Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy," "post-settlement support," "beneficiary selection," "land reform performance," and "agrarian transformation." The review focused on sources published between 1994 and 2025 to align with the period under investigation.

Sources were included if they:

- Directly addressed land restitution, redistribution, or tenure reform in South Africa.
- Provided empirical evidence, policy analysis, program evaluation, or conceptual insight relevant to implementation outcomes.
- Were published in peer-reviewed journals, official government reports, commissioned evaluations, or reputable civil society research outputs.

On the other hand, sources were excluded if they:

- Consisted solely of opinion pieces without analytical or empirical grounding.
- Were duplicated across databases or superseded by more recent or comprehensive versions.
- Focused on land reform outside South Africa without direct comparative relevance.

The review was limited to sources published in English, reflecting the dominant language of policy and academic publication in the South African land reform context.

A thematic synthesis approach guided the analysis. Coding was conducted manually, given the manageable size of the literature corpus and the interpretive nature of the review. Initial themes were informed by the research questions and the Frontiers

Research Topic (e.g., redistribution targets, institutional performance, post-settlement support, inclusion, productivity, and governance). Additional sub-themes emerged inductively during iterative reading of the sources, allowing the analysis to capture unanticipated patterns such as elite capture, gendered exclusion, and "islands of success."

Narrative synthesis was then used to compare findings across studies, trace policy shifts over time, and identify points of convergence and debate within literature.

To mitigate potential publication bias and selective reporting, the review deliberately incorporated grey literature, including government evaluations, parliamentary records, independent commissions, and civil society assessments. Findings were triangulated across academic, governmental, and non-governmental sources to enhance reliability and reduce reliance on any single evidence base. While narrative reviews do not follow formal systematic protocols, transparency in source selection, thematic organization, and cross-source comparison were prioritized to strengthen analytical rigor.

This study did not involve primary data collection or human participants. All data were drawn from publicly available secondary sources. As such, formal ethical clearance was not required. Figure 1 is a flow diagram that presents the literature identification and selection process adopted by the researchers.

# 3 Results and discussion

## 3.1 The 1994–2025 land distribution trajectory

South Africa's post-apartheid land reform program, initiated in 1994, constitutes a multifaceted policy intervention aimed at redressing historical dispossession while advancing social, economic, and spatial equity (Kloppers and Pienaar, 2014; Presidential Advisory Panel on Land Reform and Agriculture, 2019). The program is underpinned by constitutional and moral imperatives for redistributive justice, yet its interpretation and implementation have been shaped simultaneously by domestic policy frameworks and international discourses. Early market-led strategies prioritized the protection of private property rights, thereby constraining broad-based access to land. Subsequent reform efforts have had to navigate bureaucratic inertia, policy inconsistencies, and external political narratives that frame land reform as a risk to investment rather than a justice-oriented initiative (Narsiah, 2025). This tension highlights the persistent fragility of redistributive agendas within a globalized political economy.

The South African Government (2025) situates land reform within a dual moral and economic rationale. By tracing dispossession to the 1913 Natives Land Act, the policy emphasizes restitution, redistribution, and tenure security as foundational pillars. Redistribution is not solely intended to restore land but also to unlock its economic potential through sustainable production, market access, infrastructure, and skills development. Tenure security is presented as a prerequisite for livelihood sustainability, while equitable access is framed as essential for inclusive economic development. This governmental framing situates land reform as a mechanism to harmonize justice and productivity, linking rural transformation directly to national economic objectives.

Despite formal repeal of apartheid-era land laws, historical institutional, economic, and spatial distortions continue to shape reform outcomes. Letsoalo and Thupana (2013) note that early post-apartheid interventions reflected competing visions of redistribution. Market-assisted versus administratively managed models yielded markedly different outcomes in speed, cost, and socio-economic impact. Grant-based and co-payment approaches incentivized productive land use while maintaining welfare objectives, yet they frequently underestimated structural inequalities and the necessity of robust post-transfer support. By 2025, approximately 3.5 million hectares had been restored, predominantly through urban claims and financial compensation, but these measures often failed to translate into improved rural livelihoods (South African Government, 2025). Market-led approaches integrating infrastructure and market access generally produced higher per-hectare productivity, whereas supply-led programs such as PLAS and FALA expanded coverage but struggled with administrative bottlenecks and inconsistent post-transfer support (Yacim et al., 2026).

Redistribution policy is also shaped by normative ambiguities and contested legitimacy. Viljoen (2021) observes that internal and international pressures create tensions between equity and investment imperatives, while Zantsi and Nengovhela (2024) document persistent policy–practice gaps arising from institutional misalignment. Moreover, land politics intersect with social identity, belonging, and historical memory, underscoring that redistribution is not merely a technical or economic exercise (Koot et al., 2019). Integrating cultural and social dimensions provides a more nuanced understanding of legitimacy, fairness, and the transformative potential of allocations.

Recent policy discourse emphasises transformative objectives. The Minister of Land Reform and Rural Development, Republic of South Africa (2025) highlighted the need for redistribution to restore dignity, ensure food security, and advance socio-economic development, aligned with African Union Agenda 2063. This reflects a deliberate shift from transactional delivery toward outcomes that integrate reparative justice, continental developmental goals, and localized empowerment. Figure 2 summarizes cumulative land redistribution from 1994 to 2025 by program type.

Figure 2, demonstrates that market-led programs, integrating infrastructure and market access, achieved higher productivity per hectare, while supply-led programs covered larger areas and targeted marginalized groups but experienced implementation bottlenecks.

Distinct phases in the reform trajectory reveal important shifts in policy emphasis. Early Settlement Land Acquisition Grant (SLAG) programs prioritized market efficiency but failed to deliver meaningful rural transformation. Subsequent programs such as Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (LRAD) and PLAS adopted supply-led or hybrid approaches, expanding access to marginalized groups, particularly rural poor households, women, and youth. These shifts illustrate the tension between market-led efficiency and supply-led equity, highlighting trade-offs in program design and demonstrating the relevance of theoretical frameworks for understanding the successes and limitations of land reform initiatives.

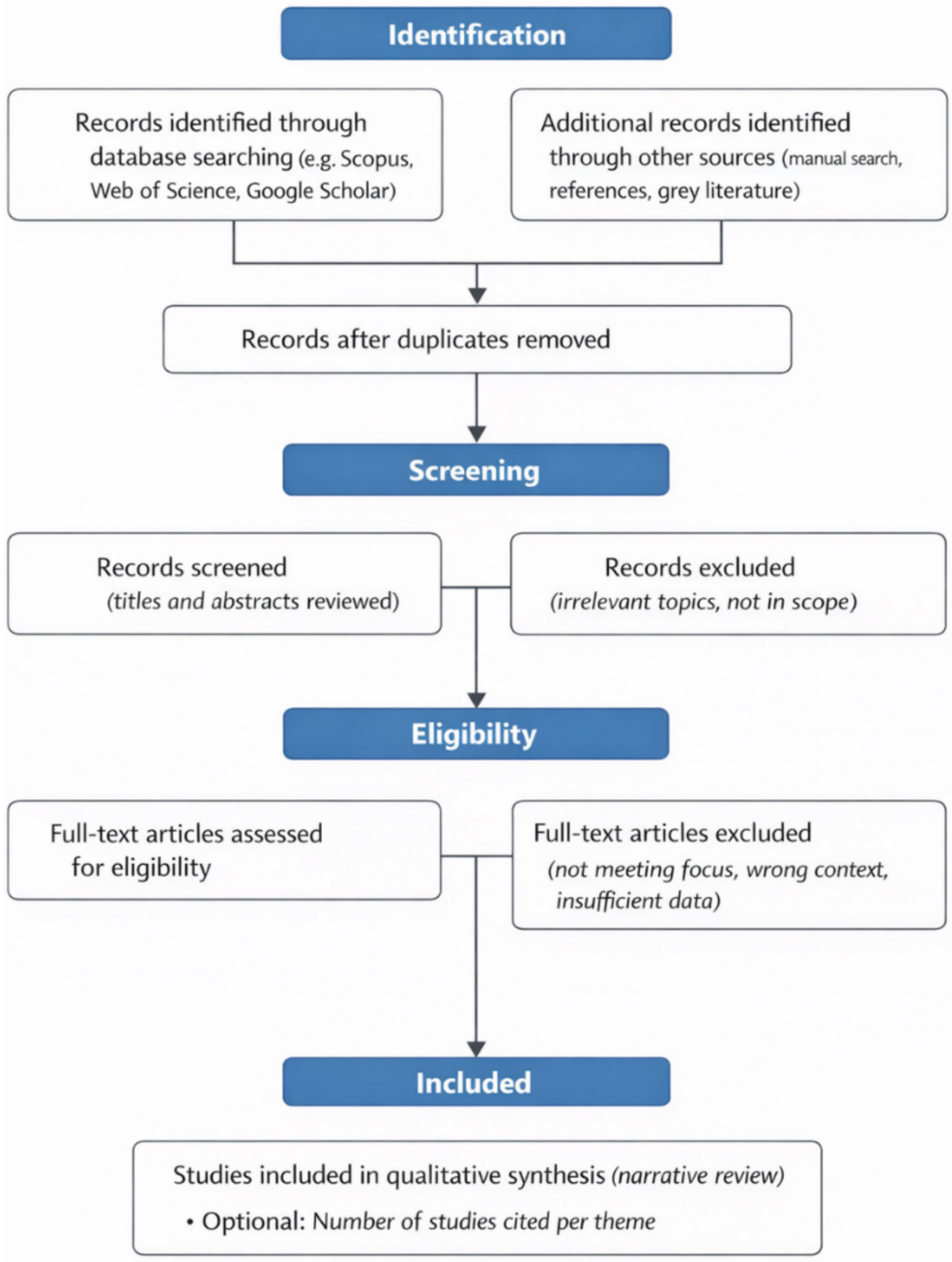


FIGURE 1
The literature identification and selection process.

## 3.2 Program performance and comparative analysis

Comparative analysis confirms that land allocation alone is insufficient for transformative outcomes. Sustainable results require participatory governance, post-transfer technical support, market integration, and community-driven decision-making. Empirical case studies illustrate these dynamics. The Double Drift Community in the Eastern Cape, restored to 1,500 members, has evolved into a community-run ecotourism and game-farming enterprise, generating sustainable income while conserving biodiversity. Ravele CPA in Limpopo demonstrates gender-responsive governance, with women participating actively in leadership and profit-sharing, highlighting the importance of intersectional inclusion. Youth-focused initiatives such as High Haven Farm and Batho Youth Empowerment illustrate the critical role of post-transfer training, infrastructure, and targeted support in enhancing local livelihoods (Zantsi and Mgidi, 2025; Yacim et al., 2026).

By contrast, early market-led programs, particularly SLAG, were constrained by inflated land prices, limited grant support, and weak post-transfer enforcement (Lahiff and Li, 2012). They went on to argue that redistribution rates were low, and land

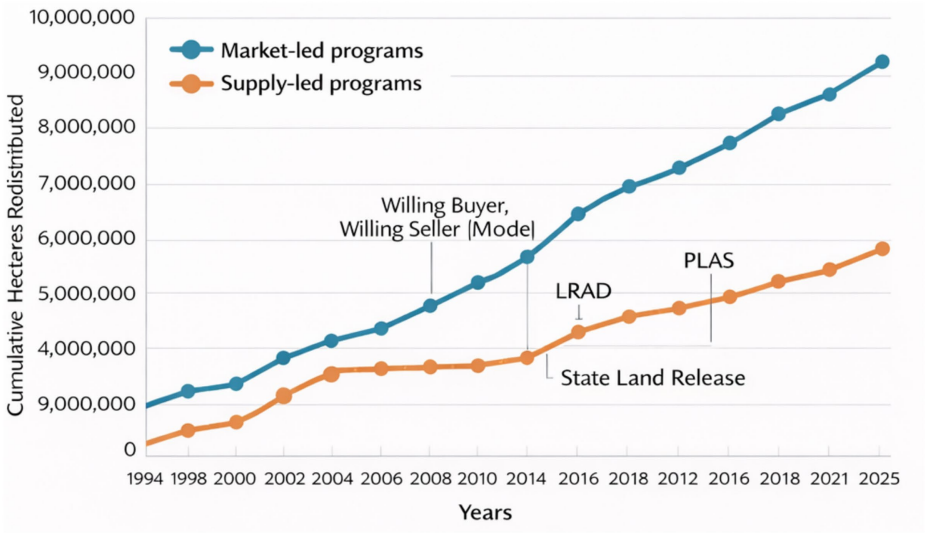


FIGURE 2
Cumulative land redistribution by program type (1994–2025).

underutilization was common. Supply-led initiatives such as PLAS and FALA broadened access to marginalized groups and included mechanisms such as rent-to-buy schemes, yet implementation suffered from administrative delays, non-compliance, and uneven productivity outcomes (Parliament of South Africa, 2024). Hybrid models that integrate market and supply-led approaches, while providing post-transfer support and participatory governance, consistently demonstrate superior outcomes (Davis et al., 2004; Jacobs, 2012; Lahiff and Li, 2012). Table 1 presents Selected Examples of Successful Land Reform Projects.

It must be noted that despite redistributing roughly 9.48 million hectares, underutilization remains high, with 70–90% of farms underperforming without targeted support. Women constitute 18–20% of beneficiaries, while youth representation remains limited (32,563 cases historically), reflecting persistent inequities (Parliament of South Africa, 2024; Vumelana Fund Group, 2025). Food security gains are largely localized, with some projects achieving up to a 10% reduction in household food insecurity, yet broader population-level impacts remain limited.

Structural analyses reveal that market-oriented policies, constrained bureaucratic coordination, and elite undermine transformational objectives (Karriem and Hoskins, 2016; Mtero et al., 2023). Well-connected beneficiaries exploit resource asymmetries, whereas marginalized rural households struggle to convert access into productive livelihoods, illustrating the intersection of policy design and structural inequities.

The data underscores the necessity of evaluating reform beyond hectares transferred, integrating productivity, equity, and social outcomes as essential measures of impact. Market-led programs favored well-resourced urban beneficiaries, achieving higher per-hectare productivity but limited coverage, while supply-led programs expanded access to poor rural populations but required substantial institutional and post-transfer support to translate land access into sustainable livelihoods. This comparative lens highlights the importance of theory-informed policy design, demonstrating how market-led versus supply-led models perform under varying structural and institutional conditions.

## 3.3 Persistent and emerging challenges

Despite progress, systemic and structural constraints continue to limit the transformative potential of land reform. Administrative inefficiencies (including delays in conveyancing, municipal rate clearance, and incomplete documentation) remain a major barrier to productivity and timely land transfers (Parliament of South Africa, 2024). Early SLAG beneficiaries frequently received marginal or low-quality land with minimal post-transfer support, resulting in high rates of project failure (Jacobs, 2012; Walker, 2012). Even LRAD and PLAS, while improving coverage and equity, encountered challenges such as elite capture, gender exclusion, uneven productivity, and poor integration with local markets (Jacobs, 2012). Better-resourced beneficiaries were able to leverage grants and access markets effectively, while poorer rural households struggled to translate land access into productive livelihoods (Mufune, 2010; Jacobs, 2012).

Legal and financial constraints further complicate reform. Section 25 of the Constitution restricts expropriation without compensation, and ambiguous redistributive criteria generate tensions between property rights and social equity (Dugard, 2019; Vink and Kirsten, 2019). Budget allocations have historically lagged rising land prices, settlement demands, and post-transfer support needs, constraining program reach and effectiveness (Vumelana Fund Group, 2025). Fragmented land information systems, limited digitization, and weak monitoring further reduce the Department's ability to evaluate performance, adapt policy, and implement corrective measures in real time (Mazwane et al., 2022).

Gender and youth inclusion remain critical concerns. Despite policy prioritisation through BSLAP and youth empowerment initiatives, enforcement gaps and structural barriers limit meaningful participation. Women remain underrepresented in governance structures, and youth engagement continues to fall short of policy

TABLE 1 Selected examples of successful land reform projects.

| Project name/ Location | Success story summary | Source |
|---|---|---|
| Double Drift Community, Eastern Cape | In 2017, 1,300 hectares (21 farms) were restored to 1,500 community members. The project is now managed as the Double Drift Nature Reserve: a community-run, ecotourism and game farming venture that combines biodiversity conservation with job creation and sustainable income generation. Community capacity-building, transparent governance, and support from NGOs and state agencies have been key to its viability. | South African Government (2025) |
| Ravele Community, Limpopo | This CPA (community property association) now runs a diversified macadamia and avocado commercial farming operation. Supported by mentorship, skills transfer, and transparent decision-making frameworks, the project has achieved positive cash flow, profit sharing, and long-term investment, with women actively represented at leadership level. | South African Government (2025) |
| High Haven Farm, Eastern Cape | A 600-hectare PLAS lease converted into a mixed-livestock and cropping enterprise. Government facilitated substantial infrastructure upgrades (irrigation, fencing) and provided business/technical training. The farm generates 24 permanent jobs and acts as a local training ground for neighbouring farmers and youth. | South African Government (2025), and Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (2019) |
| T-tlou Farming, Limpopo | On 370 hectares of municipally leased land, this black-owned agri-business, supported by government-provided irrigation infrastructure, transitioned from subsistence maize and livestock production to a diversified, market-oriented enterprise supplying regional retail chains. | South African Government (2025) |
| Warrenton Super Chicken, Northern Cape | This worker buyout/LRAD cooperative transformed a former white-owned commercial poultry farm into a black-owned broiler operation. In addition to sustained job creation, the project helped anchor local supply chains. Improved worker welfare and community participation have made it a model for LRAD's inclusive growth potential, despite some capital scarcity. | South African Government (2025) |
| Batho Youth Empowerment, Free State | A peri-urban commonage model providing secure land access, input finance, and enterprise coaching to youth-led farming initiatives. By aggregating micro-enterprises into a commonage cooperative, the project delivered economies of scale, improved extension uptake, and higher rates of business survival. | South African Government (2025) |
| Iphemeleng CPA, Northwest | As a leading gender-equity site, this project features participatory CPA governance, irrigation infrastructure, and ongoing mentorship by local commercial agribusiness. Joint ventures with the private sector and a focus on transparent financial management have supported yields and farmer retention. | South African Government (2025) |
| One Household-One Hectare, Kokstad | This district initiative piloted individualized 1-hectare allotments for landless rural households. Increased household food security, better nutrition, and improved participation of women and youth were achieved by supplementing land allocation with agricultural starter packs, training, input subsidies, and nutrition education. Community co-ops facilitate broader resource sharing and post-harvest marketing. | Minister of Land Reform and Rural Development, Republic of South Africa (2025) |
| Commercial Lease Program (PLAS) | This encompasses 238 farms (2020–2025) covering 362,000 hectares leased to emerging black farmers. Supported by business incubators and technical mentors, the best-performing projects saw steady increases in productivity and local employment; however, some struggled with delays in concluding transfer agreements and ongoing access to credit and water. | Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (2019) |

targets (Masuku et al., 2023). Table 2 summarizes the land distribution achievements, challenges, and lessons learned from South African experiences from 1994 to 2025.

## 3.4 Towards transformative and responsive reform

Emerging policy trajectories emphasise transformative land reform, characterised by participatory approaches, community-driven targeting, integrated digital land information systems, and transparent governance (Tekwa and Adesina, 2023). Public-private partnerships, agri-hubs, and technical extension services demonstrate localised improvements in productivity, livelihoods, and food security, particularly when combined with gender- and youth-focused interventions (Zantsi and Mgidi, 2025; Yacim et al., 2026).

However, scaling these successes is constrained by financial, institutional, and political limitations. Between 2019 and 2025, 238 farms (362,000 hectares) were allocated under PLAS and FALA, yet delays in conveyancing, lessee non-compliance, and weak post-transfer support diminished productivity and social impact (Parliament of South Africa, 2024; Minister of Land Reform and Rural Development, Republic of South Africa, 2025).

Comparative evidence indicates that market-led approaches optimise productivity for well-resourced beneficiaries but fail in equity and scale. Supply-led programs expand access to marginalised groups but require intensive post-transfer support for sustainable livelihoods. Hybrid models (integrating market and supply-led mechanisms, participatory governance, and post-settlement technical assistance) consistently deliver superior outcomes across productivity, inclusion, and food security indicators.

The transformative potential of land reform depends on three interlinked factors: robust institutional capacity to enforce, monitor, and support allocations; targeted empowerment of women, youth, and marginalised communities; and integration of land reform with broader economic, social, and spatial development strategies (Viljoen, 2021;

TABLE 2 Achievements, challenges, and lessons learned (1994–2025).

| Period | Key achievements | Persistent challenges | Lessons learned | Policy insights |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1994–2000 | Restitution of Land Rights Act (1994); initial redistribution via SLAG and pilot projects; – 1.2% of land transferred (Mufune, 2010; Jacobs, 2012) | Under resourced restitution commission; inflated land prices; inadequate grants; poor quality resettlement; limited inclusion of women and marginalised groups (Jacobs, 2012; Walker, 2012) | Market led models insufficient; early redistribution often failed due to lack of support and training (Mufune, 2010; Jacobs, 2012) | Stronger state role, post settlement support, and inclusive policies essential (Mufune, 2010; Jacobs, 2012) |
| 2001–2010 | LRAD and Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy (PLAS) expanded redistribution; class-oriented shift; inclusion of emerging black farmers (Mufune, 2010; Jacobs, 2012) | Elite capture; productivity decline; limited post transfer support; exclusion of poor rural households; gender inequities persist (Mufune, 2010; Jacobs, 2012) | Redistribution favoured better-resourced elites; need for capacity-building and local participation (Jacobs, 2012) | Context specific redistribution and targeted inclusion of women and marginalised groups improve sustainability (Jacobs, 2012; Tekwa and Adesina, 2023) |
| 2011–2025 | Gender responsive and data driven reform; improved coordination under NDP; gradual adoption of EWC debates; supply led, class based, gender targeted strategies (Davis et al., 2004; Jacobs, 2012) | Persistent inequality; slow institutional reform; politicisation of land issues; weak monitoring; women and marginalised groups still underrepresented (Jacobs, 2012; Molomo and Dube, 2024) | Community-driven, participatory approaches yield better outcomes; supply led and gender-targeted mechanisms are effective (Jacobs, 2012) | Intersectional inclusion, data driven planning, and sustained post-settlement support key for equitable rural livelihoods (Jacobs, 2012; Tekwa and Adesina, 2023) |

South African Government, 2025). Absent these systemic reinforcements, even significant redistributive efforts risk perpetuating historical inequalities and entrenched socio-economic hierarchies. Ultimately, analysis shows that the transformative potential of land reform depends on three interlinked factors: effective institutional capacity to enforce, monitor, and support land allocations; targeted empowerment of women, youth, and marginalized communities; and integration of land reform with broader economic, social, and spatial development planning. Without these systemic reinforcements, even well-intentioned redistribution risks perpetuating historical inequalities.

## 4 Conclusion

South Africa's land reform program has made significant strides since 1994, settling over 83,000 restitution claims and redistributing nearly 9.5 million hectares of land. Despite this progress, systemic, institutional, and social constraints continue to limit the transformative potential of redistribution. Productivity outcomes and socio-economic impacts remain uneven, particularly among women, youth, and marginalized rural households. Market-led programs achieved higher per-hectare productivity but favored better-resourced beneficiaries, whereas supply-led programs expanded access to marginalized groups but often suffered from underutilization, administrative delays, and limited post-transfer support. Lessons from successful projects, including Double Drift Community, Ravele CPA, and Batho Youth Empowerment, underscore that participatory governance, technical assistance, and market integration are critical to equitable and sustainable outcomes.

Key lessons indicate that redistribution alone is insufficient for transformation. Actionable strategies include quota-based gender and youth inclusion, structured post-transfer mentorship, integrated digital land information systems for transparency and real-time monitoring, and blended financing mechanisms tied to measurable outcomes such as productivity, income, and food security. Evidence from the Results section demonstrates that projects incorporating these elements achieve greater livelihood improvements and social cohesion, highlighting the importance of combining supply-led access with practical post-transfer support.

Finally, the study identifies a clear research agenda to inform evidence-based policy and program refinement. Future research should include rigorous impact evaluations of PLAS and FALA projects, assessing productivity, income generation, and household food security. Gendered and youth-focused analyses are needed to determine how inclusion mechanisms affect equitable access and empowerment outcomes. Additionally, studies should evaluate the effectiveness, scalability, and interoperability of digital land governance systems, including their role in reducing administrative bottlenecks and improving monitoring. Comparative analyses of financing models, including grant, loan, and public-private partnership approaches, will help identify sustainable mechanisms that link land allocation to measurable socio-economic outcomes. Implementing these research priorities will strengthen the evidence base, support data-driven decision-making, and enhance the transformative potential of land reform in South Africa.

## Author contributions

PP: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft. BZ: Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Validation.

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