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Land Reform and Rural Poverty in South Africa

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ABSTRACT The paper discusses the state of the land tenure reform in South Africa with particular attention to the former homelands. Contemporary literature is superimposed on the existing statistics on agriculture, land, land transfer and the performance of the land restitution policy since 1995. Results indicate serious doubts about the soundness of state land policy today, the failure to link tenure reform to poverty alleviation, the futility of the government's land restitution programme and the continuing disfranchisement of the majority of black rural communities. The findings are discussed within the context of the market system and it is established that the vagaries of land tenure systems in black homelands militate against the operations of a normal land market and the evolution of a functioning economic landscape. The paper argues that tenure reform should focus as a priority on black homelands for these areas to be incorporated into the formal economy. For this to occur there is urgent need to revisit the focus of land tenure reform efforts, to rethink the fear of land privatisation and to review current public policy on land and agriculture. Only through an integrated rural development strategy can there be hope of a significant reduction in rural poverty.