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AN ANALYSIS OF THE DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FACING SMALL-SCALE FARMERS IN ETHEKWINI: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE EDAMAME DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

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1. Introduction

The development of small-scale farmers is regarded as a force that can drive change in South Africa's agricultural economy. This research situates itself amidst the discourse about the development need for small-scale farmers. An imperative argument that is curtailed regarding small-scale farmers, is the role they play in African development. This has led to the connotation that African nations cannot afford to ignore small-scale farming. South Africa's agricultural and food system has been characterised by increasing concentration over past decades, with farms becoming fewer and larger in size. This system has left small-scale farmers marginalised in terms of gaining access to the agricultural economy.

Nonetheless, there have been some efforts in the agricultural economy in terms of developing small-scale farmers in the eThekweni region. The eThekweni Municipality, in partnership with the Marianhill Edamame Research Farm, implemented an 'Edamame Development Programme' (EDP). This programme is focused on developing small-scale farmers and exposing them to the planting of edamame, which is regarded as a niche crop. The research is an analysis of the development challenges and opportunities that face the small-scale farmers of eThekweni, who are beneficiaries of the Edamame Development Programme.

2. Research Aim and objectives

This study seeks to assess the developmental challenges and opportunities facing small-scale farmers' in eThekweni. It seeks to assess the value of the EDP in developing small-scale farmers who are beneficiaries of the programme. The main objectives are to:

- Assess the development opportunities of small-scale farmers in the EDP.
- Understand the role of the EDP in supporting farmers from eThekweni.
- Identify challenges facing small-scale farmers who are beneficiaries of the EDP.

3. Research methods

3.1 Research design

This study used a qualitative approach, where the major primary sources of data collection were semi-structured interviews and consultation meetings. According to Wahl, Avery and Henry (2013), the attributes of qualitative analysis are: it stresses on the outline of variables, the examination of experiences, the supply of a narrative, and therefore the exploration of multiple problems from fewer respondents than different types of analysis. Since this research seeks to explore the potential development that farmers in Marianhill may get the qualitative inquiry is thus relevant.

3.2 Research setting

The research was conducted in three different places. First, it was conducted at the Marianhill Edamame Research Farm with the project managers. Second, the research took place at Umbumbulu with small-scale farmers, and lastly, the research took place at KwaXimba with the other small-scale farmers.

3.3 Sample size and sampling methods

Creswell (2013) states that sampling involves choosing the number of people for a study in a way that those individuals represent the larger cluster from which they were selected. Maxwell (2013) and Guetterman (2015) indicate that a key qualitative feature is that research questions are usually restricted in learning a phenomena in a context and the researcher's intention is not to generalise from the sample of a population, however to clarify and describe and interpret the phenomena.

The sample size in qualitative analysis must not be large, since it is difficult to extract rich data at the same time, and also the sample size must not be large that it becomes difficult to realize data saturation. Marshall, Cardon, Poddar and Fontenot (2013) indicate that qualitative methodologists overtly recognize the dearth of standards for sample size.

Therefore, this study used 23 participants which comprised 20 small-scale farmers and 3 EDP project managers.

4. Findings

In pursuit of reviewing the developmental opportunities and challenges facing SSF benefiting from the EDP, it is important to view the profile of these SSF from Umbumbulu and from kwaXimba. Of the 20 farmers interviewed in terms of gender, figure 4.1 indicates that 60% were females and 40% were males. Similar findings are reported by Louw (2013) and Gautam and Andersen (2016), who revealed that most SSF are women and the elderly. Various authors (Hamilton, Mbenga and Ross, 2012; Aliber and Hall, 2012) argue that since the elderly and women are mostly taking an active role in farming, many development strategies need to be invested in SSF.

4.1 Development challenges facing small-scale farmers

The main challenges identified include: the lack of resources made available to farmers, access to technology, access to markets, and information. Suggested recommendations and future research include the need to restructure the EDP to ensure that it places the farmers at the centre of the programme. It was also suggested that the design of the programme should accommodate more training and development initiatives to equip the farmers. For future research perhaps, a further comparative study could be done to investigate challenges and opportunities facing farmers who were part of the EDP and those who were not. As this study was limited to farmers who are beneficiaries of the EDP.

4.1.1 Farming resources

The study found that both SSF from Umbumbulu and the farmers from KwaXimba did not have adequate farming materials and resources. The farmers from KwaXimba had difficulty in sourcing a tractor that will plough the soil in preparation for planting. The farmers indicated that the waiting period to source the tractor was long, and they have missed the planting and harvesting season of other crops.

4.1.2 Planting edamame

Among other challenges that emerged from the interview schedule, the process of planting and harvesting edamame was regarded as a challenge. The project managers indicated that planting edamame is a rigorous procedure, as it requires the farmer to pay close attention to it

4.1.3 Access to markets

Accessing markets to sell edamame and crops planted by the farmers has been viewed as a serious challenge. There are different challenges that emerge from the project managers than those that emerge from farmers. The interviews with the project managers reveal that the challenge with selling edamame to their clients, is that Woolworths is currently the main client.

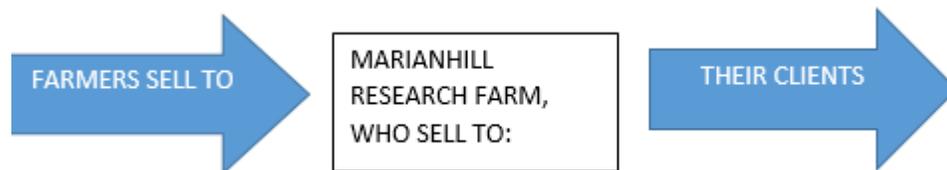


Figure 4 : *Basic cycle of the farmer's market process*

4.1.4 Access to information

In the interviews conducted with the SSF, it became clear that farmers have a lack of information. The design of the EDP was poorly articulated by the farmers, as there was a lack of clarity on specific details of the programme. Information is vital in the operation of the SSF ventures, as it helps them make informed decisions.

4.2 Developmental opportunities

4.2.1 Value chain collaboration (VCC)

The initiative of VCC is considered a very good way that could enhance the development of SSF. Interviews with the project managers of the Marianhill Research Farm indicated that the EDP takes a form of VCC. The EDP partners with a variety of actors in the agricultural chain to ensure that they are in business. They source clients to sell the raw vegetables, and they also source companies to partner with in the agro-processing of the products and source companies and establish relationships that will ensure the profitability of their business.

With the enlisted challenges facing SSF enrolled in the EDP, the VCC approach used by the Marianhill Research Farm needs to be altered to improve the development challenges of the farmers. Since the farmers enrolled in the EDP still face developmental challenges such as accessing markets, information, technology and transport a lot of support needs to be given to these farmers to supplement these challenges.

Recommendations

- To solve the tractor shortage government will intervene by allocating a tractor per resource centre. The tractor fleet would be managed and maintained by eThekweni Municipality and or national department of agriculture and fisheries. The farmers are not obtaining enough visits and knowledge from agricultural extension officers.
- Durban Fresh Produce Market can also conduct open days and train extension officers to help SSF attain better access to market information.
- As for irrigation and fencing challenges, eThekweni Municipality has been proactive by establishing communal gardens. This model is cheaper to keep up, as fewer gardens are managed. The municipality also can facilitate farmers by supplying them with the tonnes of grass and leaves cut from roadsides, so as to create their own compost. As an alternative, the municipality will build compost and sell it to the farmers at a subsidized rate.

- Incorporating more IT based applications in agriculture, as a way of luring the youth into agriculture. In South Africa, introducing IT at the resource centres, can also help attract the youths to take up agriculture as a profession.

5. Relevance and impact to eThekwini Municipality

As part of government's effort to break down barriers in the food value chain and ensure transformation in the agricultural sector. The government established Radical Agrarian Socio-Economic Transformation (RASET) programme aimed at creating an alternative value chain to deal with structural barriers to economic transformation in the agriculture sector. Through RASET, eThekwini has initiated numerous approaches to provide support to the agriculture sector. The agricultural sector plays a significant role as it has the ability to eradicate poverty, unemployment and inequality.

eThekwini Municipality has a food security vision aims to guarantee that eThekwini population has a strong and resilient food security status. Urban agriculture is one of eThekwini's policies supporting urban agricultural programmes and activities, although this policy is complemented with the rural agricultural policy (under the rural area-based management). These include the organic and sustainable agricultural initiatives, essential food sovereignty, food security, economic empowerment and environmental sustainability for eThekwini residents and it is the Municipality's responsibility for implementing approaches to aid poor citizens.