

**CONTRIBUTION OF SMALL-SCALE FOOD VENDING TO RURAL LIVELIHOODS IN  
THULAMELA MUNICIPALITY OF LIMPOPO PROVINCE IN SOUTH AFRICA**

By

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A dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of the Masters in Rural  
Development (MRDV) Degree

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SOUTH AFRICA

November 2011

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## ABSTRACT

Ready to eat foods and beverages prepared and/or sold by vendors and hawkers, especially in streets and other public places are referred to as small-scale foods. Throughout the world small-scale food vending is a common means of earning a living. However, in South Africa information on the contribution of small-scale food vending to the livelihoods of those who practice it is inadequate and unreliable. Thus, this study sought to assess the contribution of small-scale food vending to rural livelihoods in Thulamela Municipality of Limpopo Province, South Africa. The perceptions of food vendors on the contribution of vending to livelihoods, challenges and related solutions were identified. Qualitative data were collected through administering of a semi-structured interview guide during key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Thereafter, quantitative data were collected using a questionnaire administered to 126 food vendors. All the questions required responses on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences ((SPSS) version 19.0, 2011. Mean scores and standard deviations for each perception were computed and used for ranking. Frequencies of the same perceptions were also calculated. The Spearman's rank correlation coefficient analysis was conducted in order to determine if there were any relationships between perceptions of interest.

The study highlighted various ways in which small-scale food vending in Thohoyandou contributed to rural livelihoods. They were of a socio-economic development, family support, growth and development, and service provision nature. Most vendors reported that their businesses contributed towards job creation, public transport fares, fees for education and training, and also purchasing various basic necessities for the household. Its contribution to the reduction of food poverty in rural communities is crucial in development relief. Despite the considerable contribution of small-scale food vending to rural livelihoods, food vendors complained about the multiple challenges they faced. These were associated with infrastructure and basic services, legal and policy framework as well as production issues. Among others, food vendors complained about poor sanitation; lack of storage facilities; forced removals by municipal officials, absence of food vending licenses and conflict between municipality and hawking by-laws. In order to address the challenges that the food vendors faced, the following solutions were suggested: municipal officials must desist from forcefully removing of food vendors from their selling stalls; provision of proper sanitation (water and toilets) near the selling

points; allocating proper selling stalls with lockable storage facilities; and municipality must consider issuing vending licences to the small-scale food vendors.

On the basis of the results of this study, it is clear that Thulamela Municipality should explore the possible avenues for supporting small-scale food vending. Also, the municipality should officially recognize small-scale food vending as an economic opportunity for those involved. Furthermore, there is a potential for strengthening the informal sector through implementing pro-small-scale food vending strategies. Further research should be conducted focussing on engaging the customers of the street food vendors to establish their level of satisfaction with the services rendered. Lastly, the real contribution of street food vending will never be known unless there is quantification and interrogation of the various dimensions identified in this study are quantified and integrated.

**Key words:** Livelihoods; perceptions; rural; small-scale food vending; small-scale food vendors