

**AN EXAMINATION OF CONSTRAINTS ON FRUIT PRODUCTION BY SMALLHOLDER
FARMERS IN VHEMBE DISTRICT**

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ABSTRACT

The production of fruit commodity is crucial for livelihood, job creation and income generation. Smallholder fruit farming has become one of the key strategies to tackle the problems relating to health, lack of employment and poverty amongst rural people. The purpose of this study was to investigate fruit production levels by smallholder farmers in the Vhembe District of Limpopo Province, with special focus on mango, avocado, and macadamia nuts. The author investigated factors affecting smallholder fruit farmer's productivity and suggested policy recommendations that could lead to enhanced production. The author used both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection by interviewing smallholder fruit farmers, and officials dealing with fruit production using structured and unstructured administered questionnaires in making observations of their farming practices. Out of a total population of 439 fruit producers, 224 were selected by employing the stratified random sampling procedures in Thulamela, Makhado and Mutale local municipalities in Vhembe District. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 2012, 20) was used to capture and analyse data. This was done to draw frequencies and cross tabulations. Content analysis, frequency distribution, and descriptive statistics were used to answer the objectives of the study. The study revealed shortage of water, low input use, lack of storage facilities, inadequate access to land, insecure tenure, insufficient pests, insects and diseases control, lack of access roads, labour, communication infrastructure and lack of practical management skills as major constraints contributing to low fruit production. It was envisaged that the results of the research would provide compelling scientific information that would help create a better platform for implementing improved farming strategies by government.

Key Words: *Examination; constraints; fruits production; smallholder farmers and Vhembe District*