

ASSESSMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT
PROGRAMME TO THE SMALLHOLDER PRODUCERS OF LEJWELEPUTSWA
DISTRICT, FREE STATE PROVINCE,
SOUTH AFRICA

By

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ABSTRACT

It is almost a decade since DAFF (Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries) initiated the national agricultural support programme. The programme was established in 2004 with the intention of supporting the Land and Agrarian Reform projects. Agriculture is the primary source for food security and smallholder producers play an important role in the production of food. The agriculture industry needs immediate support to be sustainable. Agricultural support and development programmes act as catalysts for poverty reduction, job creation and food security. Since the 1950s government and donors have spent large amounts of money on agricultural credit programmes supporting farmers (AFRI, 1998). Smallholder producers are known for practicing indigenous farm knowledge with less farm assets, family labour and low income yet they are the primary food producers. South Africa has prioritized investing in this targeted group of smallholder producers to complement Land Reform progress. The Department of Agriculture has initiated Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) as a post-settlement support funding to bridge the gap between the progresses made by the Department of Land Affairs (DoA, 2006). The CASP model entails eradication of poverty and hunger, and increases production along the ideals of the six pillars. This study sought to assess whether the support received under CASP (Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme) leads to increased agriculture income and food production by the targeted population.

The study area was the Lejweleputswa District of the Free State in South Africa. The District is predominated by mining activities. Agriculture is the second largest economic activity in the District with high production of grain crops. It is also one of the popular Districts as it hosts agriculture shows (NAMPO) in Bothaville. Lejweleputswa has five Local District Municipalities - Nala, Tokologo, Tswelopele, Masilonyana and Matjhabeng which all form part of the study area.

The research used a mixed approach of both quantitative and qualitative methods. The population of the study was 73 smallholder agriculture projects with the total of 854 smallholder producers (farmers) funded by CASP since 2004. A sample of 120 farmers was randomly sampled and 14 key stakeholder respondents were also randomly sampled from a population of 32 from three spheres of government (Department of Agriculture). Primary and secondary data were collected. A sample of smallholder agricultural projects and the representatives from the stakeholders (three levels of Agricultural offices i.e. District, Provincial and National offices) provided the primary data. Secondary data was from a review of existing records, progress and annual reports. Structured questionnaires were used to collect data and it was designed with open and closed ended questions

Key words: CASP, Land Reform, Post settlement support, Impact, Smallholder Producer, Agriculture Extension