

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE SUSTAINABILITY OF AGRICULTURAL FLAGSHIP
PROJECTS FOR FARMERS IN SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT, LIMPOPO**

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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August 2016

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communication and coordination and insufficient information available on relevant issues to the projects.

Key words: flagship projects, agriculture projects, sustainability, smallholder farmers, livelihood.

ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to assess the sustainability of agricultural flagship projects of farmers in Sekhukhune District. Agricultural flagship projects are those projects that the Limpopo Department implemented so that farmers can have a source of income and also to reduce unemployment in the province. These projects are under CASP, LRAD and SLAG sub-programs. The objectives of the study were to identify managerial and farming skills farmers' lack, to identify problems experienced by farmers and to determine ways of improving agricultural flagship projects in Sekhukhune. The Department of Agriculture initiated agricultural flagship projects to alleviate poverty in the rural areas of Sekhukhune and most of these projects have not been successful due to poor management, lack of business and farming management skills, adequate financial injection, poor communication between government and farmers, poor co-ordination across departments, insufficient agricultural inputs and market accessibility. To address the mentioned problems, a list of all active or operating agricultural flagship projects in the district was drawn up. The random sampling procedure was used to select farmers to be surveyed. From each project, the chairperson and three active committee members namely, the treasurer, secretary and one additional member were interviewed. The total population of twenty extension officers in the district were interviewed. The basic objective in using a questionnaire was to obtain facts and opinions about an assessment of the sustainability of agricultural flagship projects for farmers.

The key findings of the study revealed that most farmers are more vulnerable in sustaining their projects, which then affects their livelihoods. For instance, in accessing market for their agricultural produce they sell them at the gate to generate profit. Requisite skills for the farming business will help them undertake income generating activities to access market with less competition as cooperatives will be formed to sell their agricultural products in bulk. It is recommended therefore that farmers have a timely and reliable information about markets, making the provision of information on prices, a whole range of business-related information is essential, such as who the buyers are and what their terms and conditions for doing business are. Therefore, the small-scale farmers are encouraged to acquire skill and experience in negotiating fair contracts to ensure that they protect their interests and are not taken advantage of or caught unawares about long-term implications of using credit. For the agricultural projects to be sustainable in production and income generation depend on access to finance for production start-up inputs like seed and fertilizer, and for fixed capital improvements. Young people also need to be encouraged to be involved in the farming business as the findings revealed that most of the farmers were elderly. There was poor