

The Evolution of Effective Leadership Practices in Botswana Horticulture Council

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Botswana Horticultural Council was formed by District Horticultural Associations. It represents and advocates for the interest and development of horticultural farmers. Botswana Horticultural Council leads the associations by acting as their voice, protecting their interest, advocating for conducive and favourable horticultural policies, working closely with the Ministry of Agriculture for promoting and facilitating sound extension services for horticulture farmers in the country. Extension Service provides technical knowledge and skills for improved horticultural crop production that ensures good quality products. Botswana Horticultural Council creates linkages by networking with other relevant organizations within the country and outside. It promotes sustainability of the horticultural business in the country by ensuring improved management practices, conformity to the required production standards, good handling and packaging of products, proper records keeping and marketing efficiency. It plays a leading and coordinative role in horticultural crop production in Botswana.

INTRODUCTION

The Horticulture Sector in Botswana is still at its infancy stage despite efforts by Botswana Government to develop it. This sector has the potential to contribute significantly to employment creation and poverty eradication in the country. In the Agriculture sector, it is the Horticulture Sector that has doubled its production in the last decade. Though there is such a promising significant progress in horticultural production, the production is far from reaching the national demand. The local production is at 40% of Botswana's annual demand (Moepeng, 2013, Commonwealth Secretariat and Ministry of Agriculture, 2011, FAO, 2014).

Botswana Government through the Ministry of Agriculture established the Department of Agricultural Business Production in 2007. This department's mandate is to promote agribusiness through commercialization of the communal sector and creation of new enterprises. Therefore, the Agricultural Extension services are under immense pressure to provide business advisory services through agricultural projects. This is an effort by the Botswana Government to commercialize the agriculture sector. Despite this positive trend towards helping the horticultural producers, the Department has limited staff to serve the whole country (Commonwealth Secretariat and Ministry of Agriculture, 2011, FAO, 2014).

However, the Department of Agricultural Business Promotion attempts to build business and entrepreneurial skills by offering training in entrepreneurial skills for agribusiness to individual farmers and farmers' groups through conferences, workshops, short courses and seminars. Over and above this, it assists farmers in preparing farm management booklets, enterprise budget plans for crops and application for funding. Further to this, this Department helps other Ministry Departments and Non- Governmental organizations that deal with financing agricultural projects to determine their feasibility and financial viability. This weakens the Department's support for the extension service. Although the Ministry of agriculture extension services have staff trained in crops and livestock production, they do not have business skills that farmers need to be business entrepreneurs. As a result of this situation, they rely on the assistance of the Department of Agricultural Business Promotion, which does not have enough staff (FAO, 2014).

In light of the above situation, Botswana Horticulture Council should strive to work closely with the Department of Agricultural Business Promotion to ensure that all levels of farmers receive the appropriate extension service. This could promote transformation of small scale farms from subsistence level to businesses. The Botswana Horticultural Council as it provides leadership to all farmers irrespective of their level of their production should also influence continuous research service to ensure that some producers are not left behind in terms of production and benefiting from the available markets. It has been found that the growth in horticulture

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