


Chapter 1

Agriculture as a Key Driver for Community Development: A Case of Magomani Village, Limpopo Province

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ABSTRACT

Limpopo province covers 123 600 km² and has a population of 5.3 million people, 89% of whom live in non-urban regions and 40–50% of whom are unemployed. It is undoubtedly South Africa's poorest province. The community of Magomani village for a long time has used commercial farming as the main basis for survival and sustaining livelihoods. However, because of the obstacles that local farmers have experienced over the years, there has been a reduction in commercial farming development which has led to the rise of poverty. These obstacles include: insufficient farming land which has been caused by population increase and land occupation; because of a variety of restrictions and constraints, smallholder farmers in rural areas face a lack of market; lack of investment from government and other potential sponsors, lack of working capital which result in poor veld condition and restriction to access of market. This study was qualitative in nature and aimed to investigate how commercial farming can be revived to develop the community of Magomani village.

INTRODUCTION

South African agriculture is best described as a dual system in which commercial agriculture, which is well developed and capital demanding, contributes significantly to national food security. Smallholder farmers and subsistence farmers work in the second form of agriculture, which is less developed and less resourced. Despite the fall in agricultural activity among most rural South Africans because of urbanization, a close to 78% of rural households in South Africa continue to engage in agricultural activities (Statistics South Africa, 2012). Numerous data from Statistics South Africa (2012) show the 75 percent

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of south African households are involved in smallholder farming, as well as how these people are among the poorest in South Africa, with little livelihood assets and vulnerability to household food insecurity.

The study commissioned by Machethe et al. (2004) concluded that farming is the utmost contributor to household income in the Limpopo Province. Agriculture has always been the backbone of many Indigenous communities' livelihood, not only in Limpopo but also in many other provinces across the country (Maponya, 2021). It is one of the most essential foundations of the provincial economy since it plays such a vital part in the province's economic growth (Mahopo 2023). Agricultural production is said to go through three stages in most cases: hobby farming, subsistence farming, and finally commercial farming (Maponya, 2021). Agricultural production is frequently divided into two systems: large-scale commercial farming and small-holder farming. These methods thrived owing to the advent of apartheid practices, in which white people performed large-scale commercial farming for decades and it was solely reserved for white people (Thamaga-Chitja & Morojele, 2014).

Even though agriculture is one of the province's economic contributors, many rural communities within the Limpopo province were and still live in poverty-stricken conditions. The situation in some village seemed to have worsen due to certain challenges that hinders them to break the poverty cycle and some of them include but not limited to insufficient farming land, which has been caused by population increase and land occupation; lack of secure title to the land, lack of investment from government and other potential sponsors, lack of working capital which result in poor veld condition and maintenance thus today, people have inadequate or damaged infrastructure. Ndlovu, Mwale and Zuwarinwe, (2021) submit that the above challenges do not only affect Limpopo, but these are challenges which are also common in other provinces such as Mpumalanga, Free State, and Eastern Cape (Ndlovu et al., 2021).

Due to lack of jobs in the country, farming becomes one of the key aspects which provide jobs for people at community level while ensuring that some households earn income. Araia (2019) also submits that one of the key roles of commercial farming at a community level is poverty alleviation through creating jobs for the community. It also plays an imperative role in terms of food provision which ensures food security as both community and province in totality.

According to Garidzarai (2018), it is evident that farming plays a key role in economic development at community level and reducing poverty. Although farming plays an important role, it is often overlooked thus facing a number of challenges which over the years have crippled commercial farming in Magomani village. The study focused on crop farming which is highly practiced by most Magomani village farmers. The study argued that farmers in Magomani village face a number of challenges in their commercial farming and require interventions in reviving their farming sector. The study argues that with government interventions, traditional leadership and other stakeholders, there is potential to revive local commercial farming with sustainable strategies that are sustainable and are adequate to be implemented.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Agriculture has long been a fundamental pillar of rural economies, yet in Magomani Village, Limpopo Province, its potential as a driver for community development remains underutilized. Despite the village's rich agricultural resources and favorable climatic conditions, many local farmers struggle with outdated farming techniques, limited access to markets, and inadequate financial support. These challenges have led to low productivity, food insecurity, and a lack of economic opportunities, exacerbating poverty in the community. Without sustainable agricultural development, Magomani Village continues

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