


Chapter 21

Tailoring Indigenous Economic Systems for New Generation Agripreneurship Through Indigenous Modernism

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ABSTRACT

The agricultural landscape in South Africa presents a unique opportunity to leverage the wisdom of the past with the innovations of the present. This chapter aimed to explore modern techniques that can be used to tailor indigenous economic systems to best suit the new generation of agripreneurs and promote market access. Furthermore, exploring the challenges that could accompany this tailoring. The study used a desktop method to collect secondary data using keywords related to the study to obtain relevant publications. This study found that farming stokvels can be modernised through modern digital tools and precision farming technologies. However, the digital divide, loss of traditional communal values, increased complexity and costs associated with technology are some of the major shortfalls that could undermine the success of modernising these indigenous economic systems. It was recommended that stakeholders, actively promote the integration of modern technologies with traditional practices to enhance the effectiveness of tailoring indigenous economic systems.

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous economic systems, such as farming stokvels, livestock mafisa, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), and resource pooling, have been foundational to rural livelihoods in South Africa for generations. These systems are not just economic mechanisms but are deeply rooted in community cohesion, reciprocal support, and an intimate understanding of local ecological conditions (Grey &

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Patel, 2015). They enable communities to share risks, pool resources, and collectively tackle the challenges of rural life. However, while these systems are rich in cultural and social capital, they often lack the financial management, technological integration, and market access necessary to thrive in today's globalized economy (Sansom, 2024).

To address these gaps, indigenous modernism offers a promising pathway. By strategically adapting these traditional systems with modern techniques, such as financial literacy training, digital platforms, and value addition strategies, indigenous modernism seeks to enhance their effectiveness and sustainability (Trendov, Varas & Zeng, 2019). This approach not only preserves the cultural integrity and communal strengths of these systems but also equips young agripreneurs with the essential tools to navigate the increasingly complex and competitive agricultural landscape.

By embracing Indigenous modernism, these age-old practices can be transformed into dynamic, resilient, and market-savvy systems that continue to support rural communities while opening new opportunities for growth and prosperity in the modern economy. This is not just a preservation of heritage, it can also be an evolution that aligns traditional wisdom with the innovations of today, empowering a new generation of youth agripreneurs to thrive in the agriculture of tomorrow.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

South Africa possesses a significant amount of arable land, predominantly located in rural areas, which presents a critical opportunity for agricultural development (Fox, Senbet & Simbanegavi, 2016). Despite this potential, there is a noticeable trend of urban migration among young people, leading to a declining interest in rural agricultural careers (Geza, Ngidi, Slotow & Mabhaudhi, 2022). The South African National Development Plan identifies agriculture as a key economic driver in rural areas, with the potential to create substantial employment opportunities and stimulate economic growth (Cousins, 2015). Yet, despite these prospects, there remains a strikingly low percentage of young people engaging in the agricultural sector (Magagula & Tsvakirai, 2020).

The current participants in this sector are predominantly those who hold extensive indigenous knowledge, gained from generations of lived experience and traditional practices (Grey & Patel, 2015). However, as the world rapidly transforms, young people are increasingly drawn to technology-driven, instant, and more efficient methods (Chipfupa & Tagwi, 2021). This divergence between the traditional and the modern poses a significant challenge which is the risk of losing valuable indigenous knowledge as the older generation exits the sector.

To address this gap, there is a need to blend indigenous agricultural practices with modern technological advancements, creating a hybrid approach that resonates with the aspirations of young people. By incorporating digital tools, precision farming, and value-added strategies into indigenous methods, it is possible to make agriculture more attractive to the youth. This approach not only holds the promise of revitalizing the agricultural sector but also ensures the preservation and enhancement of indigenous knowledge systems, making them relevant and accessible in a rapidly evolving world. The integration of these elements could be the key to drawing young people back into agriculture, ensuring the sustainability of rural economies and the continued legacy of indigenous agricultural wisdom.

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