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**Agricultural Extension and Market-Led Agrarian Reform:
Findings from an Exploratory Case Study in Limpopo Province, South Africa**

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Abstract

In 1994, as South Africa was transitioning out of the apartheid era, the new, democratically elected government was forced to confront a largely polarized agricultural sector. Colonial rule and apartheid policies had systematically dispossessed the African majority from land. At the end of apartheid, the white minority, comprising less than 10% of the population, controlled 87% of total agricultural land. To confront the harsh realities of food insecurity and poverty, South Africa's post-apartheid democracy implemented land and agrarian reform policies. The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences and perceptions regarding these policies of emerging black farmers and agricultural extension officers in Limpopo Province, South Africa. The province has been an active participant in land and agrarian reform initiatives, but over 70% of resettlement projects have been deemed as not functioning. With such a high failure rate, the experiences of the people most directly impacted by reform initiatives in Limpopo can help clarify those elements of policy that are currently working and those that are not. This research utilized a qualitative case study approach to data collection. Analysis of data identified a series of consistent themes: Dependency, Knowledge and Skills, Networks, and Realistic Expectations. Based on these findings, a series of implications and recommendations regarding future research and agricultural extension programming are presented.

Keywords: Extension, Governmental Organizations, Case Study Research, Qualitative Research, Farmers, Social Change

Introduction

In 1994, as South Africa was transitioning out of the apartheid era, the new, democratically elected government was forced to confront a largely polarized agricultural sector. Colonial rule and apartheid policies had systematically dispossessed the African majority from land (Thompson, 2000). At the end of apartheid, the white minority, comprising less than 10% of the population, controlled 87% of total agricultural land (Atuahene, 2011). In contrast, millions of black South Africans lived in impoverished conditions with little opportunity to secure land rights or ownership (Cousins, 2007; Lahiff, 2007; Mather, 2002; Thompson, 2000). To confront these harsh realities, the African National Congress (ANC), the ruling party of South Africa's post-apartheid democracy, implemented land and agrarian reform policies. By 1997, a policy framework for land reform had been developed in the effort

to address the racial disproportion of landholdings and the historical injustices of colonialism and apartheid (Cousins, 2007; Lahiff, 2007).

Guiding land redistribution efforts was a framework known as market-led agrarian reform (MLAR), which fully compensates landowners according to market price for the voluntary sale of their land (Borras, 2005). As opposed to state-led interventions, which often expropriate land below market prices, MLAR seeks to support intended beneficiaries to access land through markets (Neto, 2004). Through government grants and loan financing, qualifying individuals are able to make offers on white-owned property (Lahiff, 2007). In addition, through tenure reform, the South African government also attempted to improve land access for those South Africans who had been living in

former homelands. Those individuals, especially women, living under customary law, had difficulty securing formal rights to land, which was often held by the state and administered by traditional leaders. In response, South Africa has attempted to address these tenure issues by assisting individuals to gain occupancy land rights within communal systems (Cousins, 2007; Rangan & Gilmartin, 2002).

As a policy framework for land reform, MLAR is squarely entrenched within the neoliberal agenda (Lahiff, Borrás, & Kay, 2007). Supported by institutions like the World Bank, the intent of MLAR is for “new ‘family farmers’ [to] be drawn into increasingly liberalized markets for land commodities and agricultural services” (Lahiff et al., 2007, p. 1420). This approach intended to both address racial injustices and preserve the strong commercial agricultural sector that had been previously established by white farmers (Lahiff, 2007). Despite these aims, scholars have critiqued this policy framework for failing to achieve its objectives (Borrás, 2003; Kepe, 2009; Lahiff, 2007; Lahiff et al., 2007). For example, although the goal of the South African government was to have 30% of all white-owned commercial farmland redistributed by 2014 (Lahiff, 2007), only 8% had been achieved by 2010 (Atuahene, 2011). Beyond the actual distribution of the land, MLAR has also been criticized for its high failure rate of land transfer cases due to lack of social, economic and technical support services (Atuahene, 2011; Lahiff & Cousins, 2005). Government-run agricultural extension is often viewed by the South African public as inaccessible to resource-poor farmers (Ngomane, 2010). Given these stark realities, rhetoric regarding land reform in South Africa has become increasingly fiery, and some politicians, such as ANC Youth League Leader Julius Malema, have advocated for land expropriation without compensation (Mthembu & Monthso, 2011).

Conceptual Framework

As land reform policy debates are waged, efforts to successfully incorporate black South Africans into a highly functioning commercial agricultural sector continues. Government-run agricultural extension is helping coordinate land reform efforts by working to provide new black farmers with financial and educational opportunities in order to integrate them into markets. Oftentimes, the vision for these emerging farmers is to develop their operations into large-scale, highly efficient and productive commercial businesses (Lahiff, 2007). As policymakers negotiate long-term decisions, the immediate work of agricultural extension cannot be overlooked. Assessing the perspectives of extension officers and the farmers with whom they interact contributes to understanding the opportunities and constraints that intended beneficiaries of land reform currently face.

Studies to assess the current status and make improvements to agricultural extension in various countries have been consistently conducted (Bedo & Dooley, 2004; Cho, 2002; Dragon & Place, 2006; Reynar & Bruening, 1996). Ngomane, Thomson, and Radhakrishna (2002) recommended that extension in the Northern Province, South Africa incorporate participatory methods in order to become more responsive to farmer needs. In Limpopo Province, South Africa, Bruening et al. (2002) recommended that agricultural extension officers could better serve emerging black farmers with better access to technical information, improved communication skills, and more opportunities to utilize technology. Since that study, South Africa’s Department of Agriculture has implemented the Extension Recovery Plan. Five pillars inform the plan, which specifically focus on enhancing organizational accountability, strengthening its image, expanding skill sets among personnel, building its information and communications technology infrastructure,

and recruiting capable new personnel (Mudau, Geyser, Nesamvuni, & Belemu, 2009).

With land reform debate intensifying, the time is ripe to continue the investigation of agricultural extension in South Africa.

Assessing the perceptions and experiences of both farmers and extension officers can foster mutual understanding, aiding their joint effort to capitalize on opportunities and adapt to challenges. In addition, these perspectives can help inform policymakers' comprehension of the realities regarding South Africa's land and agrarian reform.

To conduct this research, sensemaking provided an apt theoretical framework. Sensemaking is the process by which individuals interpret and give meaning to their experiences. Among the millions of bits of data that individuals encounter, people tend to focus on only a few to organize their experiences in the world (Chia, 2000). As individuals identify and label pieces of their experience, meaning is then negotiated through communication. Sensemaking is a social activity that occurs within the boundaries of specific social and cultural contexts (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). Sensemaking occurs most explicitly when individuals encounter problematic situations that are contrary to their expectations. To make sense of the situation, individuals search for understanding, a process that often involves relying on strands of various "frameworks such as institutional constraints, organizational premises, plans, expectations, acceptable justification, and traditions inherited from predecessors" (Weick et al., 2005, p. 409).

Given the underperformance of South African land and agrarian reform, it is likely perceived as problematic by those most directly impacted. From a sensemaking perspective, assessing perceptions of extension officers and emerging black farmers provides insight into the meanings that both are constructing regarding land and

agrarian reform. This type of information is valuable to both extension officers and emerging black farmers, for it can foster mutual understanding. Agricultural extension will be better positioned to adapt to farmers' needs, and farmers will have a better sense of the services and opportunities that extension can provide. Furthermore, assessing perceptions of extension officers and farmers from a sensemaking framework also provides valuable information to policymakers. Land policy decisions made by the government can be more solidly based on the realities and priorities of the people most immediately affected by land reform.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences and perceptions of emerging black farmers and agricultural extension officers in Limpopo Province, South Africa. Limpopo Province, located in the northeast of South Africa, provides a compelling case study. An arid region, Limpopo lacks resources such as fresh water and arable land. Confronting high poverty rates and severe income inequality, most of the population lives in rural areas (Pauw, 2005; Ramathoka, Masekoameng, & Jacobs, 2009). As such, Limpopo Province has been an active participant in land and agrarian reform initiatives, but over 70% of resettlement projects have been deemed as not functioning (Lahiff et al., 2007). With such a high failure rate, the experiences of the people most directly impacted by reform initiatives in Limpopo can help clarify those elements of policy that are currently working and those that are not. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

1. Explain the experiences of emerging black farmers and agricultural extension officers in Limpopo Province regarding land and agrarian reform projects over the last decade, and

2. Identify themes within agricultural development projects that agricultural extension officers and emerging black farmers in Limpopo Province perceive as challenges and opportunities.

Methods

This research, intending to identify important themes for future study, is an exploratory qualitative case study. Qualitative methods were used in order to pursue in-depth understandings of experiences and perceptions (Creswell, 2007). The case study approach was suitable because it provides a detailed understanding of a bounded, “integrated system,” which was Limpopo Province for the purposes of this study (Stake, 2000, p. 436). Case studies also provide a methodological framework to conduct an in-depth investigation of how wider structures help shape and form realities in specific contexts (Burawoy, 1991). Considering structural influences was particularly appropriate for this study since sensemaking contends that individuals’ meanings are influenced by social and cultural contexts.

Site Selection and Population of Study

Limpopo Province, comprised of five municipal districts, served as the case. This location was chosen because of its diverse local population, history of land redistribution, and agrarian reform activities underway. The population for this study was emerging black farmers in the five municipal districts of Limpopo Province who were participating in land and agrarian reform initiatives and the extension officers who were coordinating these initiatives. Purposive sampling was utilized in order to ensure that farmers and extension officers working in each of the five districts of Limpopo participated in the study. Officials at the Limpopo Department of Agriculture (LDA) were asked to identify agricultural

development projects of emerging black farmers in which agricultural extension was involved. The researchers also requested that the LDA select projects that were on both communal land and formerly white-owned land and ranged in success.

Data Collection

Onsite data collection took place during June, 2011 throughout Limpopo Province. A key informant interview protocol was constructed by the research team. In total, eight agricultural development projects were visited covering all five municipal districts. A total of 21 interviews were conducted with farmers, extension agents, and governmental representatives. In order to document diverse perspectives, farmers of different ages, backgrounds, gender, and ethnicities were interviewed. Extension officers accompanied the researchers to each project visit and participated in the interviews and focus groups with the farmers. The extension officers also aided with translation, when necessary.

To collect data, the researchers used semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and participant observation. Enhanced validity resulted from triangulating the data through using multiple methods of data collection (Stake, 2000; Cho & Trent, 2006). Triangulation was also achieved by interacting with individuals with diverse perspectives, including men, women, farmers, extension officers, those who had projects on communal land, and those now occupying land that was formerly white-owned.

During the interviews, focus groups, and participant observation, hand-written notes were relied upon to document participants’ perspectives and field notes were taken to reflect researcher observations. One researcher conducted line-by-line coding of the notes and extensively memoed in order to generate emergent themes, which allowed for an inductive analytical process (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). As themes arose, the

researchers collectively explored negative cases in order to ensure that the themes were integrative and representative. Credibility of the data was strengthened through member-checking (Cho & Trent, 2006). Drafts of this article were shared with officials at LDA, and their perspectives and reactions were considered before submitting the article for review. Actual names of individuals have been replaced by fictitious names to protect confidentiality.

Results

Analysis of the interviews, focus groups, and other data identified a series of consistent themes: *Dependency, Knowledge and Skills, Networks, and Realistic Expectations*.

Dependency

Farmers' dependence on government financial and programmatic support emerged as a consistent theme among both farmers and extension officers. In the effort to support emerging black farmers, the LDA offers a variety of grants to purchase new technology, farm infrastructure, machinery, and inputs. Government funding also exists for farmers to attend educational courses on technical information and life skills. From many of the farmers' perspectives, the future success of farm operations depended on government support. At one cooperative, farmers identified the expense of inputs as their primary concern; without additional government funding, they worried that plans to expand their broiler project would go unrealized. Four women who ran another broiler project on communal land in another municipality echoed this sentiment. They recognized that their goal of building a processing plant largely depended on the degree of financial support they received from the government.

Some farmers recognized dependence on the government to be problematic. One

female farmer, Lucy, had successfully established a broiler operation after taking possession of a white-owned commercial farm. Although she valued the support she had received from the government, Lucy believed that her success derived from her passion in farming, her strong work ethic, and her desire to be successful. The reason for the high failure rate among emerging black farmers, Lucy determined, was others' expectations of handouts from the government. From Lucy's perspective, too many intended beneficiaries of land reform had failed because they expected the government to keep them afloat, instead of using government support to strive toward independence: "at the end of the day, the government cannot support all of the farmers." This attitude seemed to be based on Lucy's personal experience: of the more than 91 farmers who initially entered a cooperative agreement to run Lucy's operation, only six remain. Many of those who had left the operation simply "thought the government would just deposit 15,000 Rand into their account."

This concern regarding government dependency was also expressed by agricultural extension officers. One female extension officer, upon considering difficult challenges facing project success, immediately responded "the dependency syndrome." Another extension officer wondered aloud how to "graduate" emerging farmers from government support and then told the story of a young black farmer who is currently farming a large vegetable production operation. Although the government had recently helped fund a new tractor and drip irrigation tape, the farmer had just submitted another grant application for more funding.

Taken together, these perspectives indicate the dominating role that government fills for emerging black farmers. Although MLAR intentionally pursues a neoliberal course, the government

has nonetheless emerged as the major institutional support for many farmers. Farmers are leaning on the government for assistance to such an extent that many fear that the fates of their operations will be determined by government funding.

Knowledge and Skills

According to Lahiff (2007), one of the reasons for the high failure rate of agricultural development projects is due to inexperienced black farmers taking over large, white commercial operations. Without the knowledge, experience, skills, and training to manage a commercial venture, failure is almost guaranteed. Both extension officers and farmers place high value on educational and technical support, although not all of the farmers had been able to capitalize on these opportunities. While all of the farmers in the sample had received grant support to purchase materials or build infrastructure, only a percentage had enrolled in courses related to technical and/or life skills. Those who had received educational support perceived their operations as more secure and viable than those who had limited access to educational opportunities.

Those who had received training emphasized its importance. At one of the broiler cooperatives, two members had been sponsored by the government to participate in intensive educational training on production and business management. According to both men, their participation had allowed them to teach other cooperative members their new skills, and in turn, strengthen the viability of the operation. A similar sentiment was shared by three members of another cooperative that had recently blossomed into a successful export business. Each readily referred to the technical assistance they received as a primary reason for their cooperative's financial growth. Likewise, Lucy, the owner

of the large broiler operation, identified her active participation in technical courses as an important aspect to her financial stability. Lucy continued her line of thought, expressing that the success of land and agrarian reform largely depends on the transfer of knowledge and skills to new farmers.

Extension officers also identified the development of technical skills as essential for organizational improvement. Although re-skilling extension serves as one pillar of the Extension Recovery Plan, several officers noted a lack of adequate monitoring and evaluation. At an event celebrating young farmers, both farmers and LDA officials highlighted that the outcomes of previous participants had not been traced over the years. Without baseline data, they noted, agricultural extension was limited in its ability to document the experiences of these young farmers. This is particularly unfortunate since many of these farmers likely represent the bright spots of agricultural development in Limpopo. Such a shortcoming is recognized by members within LDA. For example, one LDA official indicated that LDA is dedicated to forming partnerships that build organizational capacity for monitoring and evaluation.

Networks

Although farmers perceived government linkages as crucial to success, those in the most secure situations also acknowledged the value of other social and information networks. Members of one of the broiler cooperatives explained that their positive relationships with local community members translated to a solid market base. The community also supported the cooperative in other ways, such as providing advice on business management. Members of an egg cooperative on communal land also indicated the benefits of developing networks and partnerships with local

community members and institutions. In addition to building an informal market among community members, the cooperative had also linked with local schools. The cooperative provided students educational tours of the operation and sold eggs to the school as part of its nutrition program. In another municipal district, Thaba, a middle-aged farmer who grew vegetables on a small plot, recognized other benefits to social networks. His membership in the local agricultural association provided a platform to communicate his needs: "I am part of a group, an association of farmers...they are really helpful in communicating with the government and sharing information."

Lucy spoke enthusiastically of her processing and marketing partnership with a white neighbor, who also had a large commercial chicken operation. These types of linkages form a strategy that the government and universities are advocating in order to enhance post-settlement support. Facilitated by agricultural extension, Lucy has formed a business partnership with her neighbor, who owns a slaughterhouse and has solid connections in the market. In return for selling her broilers to her neighbor, Lucy receives monetary payment, a stable source for inputs, and technical assistance. Lucy and her neighbor have also agreed to dedicate a portion of her profit each month to pay off her debt to government lending agencies, a goal that Lucy anticipates achieving within three years. Upon reflection, Lucy has found this partnership so beneficial that she expressed skepticism when considering a more radical land reform policy that would expropriate land without compensation. She worried that such a policy would eliminate the potential for these types of partnerships.

Realistic Expectations

According to the LDA, all eight of the agricultural projects visited were considered to be "emerging," since commercial viability was the aim of each. However, as told by the farmers and extension officers, the status of these projects varied widely. Some of the participants expressed that their projects had realistic potential for market viability. Lucy, for example, produces an estimated 240,000 broilers per year and is confident that the partnership with her neighbor will continue to provide her a stable market so that she can invest in her operation. Supporting Lucy's vision, an extension officer detailed Lucy's business plans, which included buying into a share of her neighbor's slaughterhouse. Members of a fruit cooperative also conveyed optimism for the future. With the technical support of agricultural extension, they have seen their exports and profits increase steeply over the last several years. In another municipal district, the members of the egg cooperative on communal land have successfully developed links to both formal and informal markets. Several of the members explained that after a percentage of the profits have been dedicated toward paying off loans, profits are then distributed, extra income that members have invested into their children's educations. For one member, the education of children was also linked to the future success of the cooperative: "The children in school now will help the cooperative with their computer skills and accounting skills."

Unfortunately, these hopeful operations only tell a part of the story. Other project beneficiaries were in more tenuous situations. Members of an irrigation cooperative on communal land described a lack of participation among members, noncompliance with cooperative by-laws, youth disinterest, and a non-functioning packing plant. Food

production was under capacity, and internal dissent and tension plagued the cooperative. Cooperative members displayed their lack of cohesion when several argued as to whether more land could be incorporated into their project. Further fueling ill sentiment were several conflicts that had arisen between the cooperative and other community members over land use. As members spoke dispiritingly of the cooperative's current situation, the local extension officer attempted to encourage enthusiasm by speaking about the spirit of cooperativism. Later, however, during an individual conversation, another extension officer doubted the cooperative's viability, noting that too many cooperatives exist in name only.

Thaba, the vegetable farmer growing a small plot of cabbage, maize and tomatoes, had been able to develop a local market. Encouraged by his local success, he supported more radical land reform policy so that he could expand his operation from his current eight hectares to 100 hectares. The viability of such a vision was cast into doubt when Thaba later identified his ability to access new markets as a major challenge. The four women operating a broiler project also wanted to expand their operation but doubted their ability to do so considering limited market opportunities. LDA administrators and extension officers concurred, as both consistently identified market development as a primary need to be addressed.

Developing realistic visions for land and agrarian reform is even more pertinent when the natural constraints of land productivity in Limpopo are considered. A former agricultural extension officer indicated that lack of arable land and irrigation sources in Limpopo limits agricultural productivity. From his perspective, visions to expand crop and livestock production were overly optimistic, especially considering the climatic pressures

and variations that are likely to intensify. Therefore, beyond skewed market plans, the availability of natural resources must also be taken into account when developing realistic expectations for Limpopo agriculture.

Conclusions

This study reflects input from key informants, focus groups, and observational data from farmers, extension educators, and government officials in Limpopo Province, South Africa. Overall, several key themes were identified as being particularly relevant to understanding the complexity of agricultural development in the context of land and agrarian reform. For this study, sensemaking provided a framework to better understand the experiences of emerging black farmers and the extension officers with whom they work. Experiencing the complicated consequences of land reform policy, farmers and extension officers alike must navigate the tenuous situation. Aiding them in this process is the co-construction of meaning, indicated by the themes that emerged as both farmers and extension officers interact with one another. For both groups, their reflections on land and agrarian reform revealed four distinct themes: dependency on the government, the importance of educational support, social networks, and realistic expectations. These themes help participants structure their own understandings of their experiences with land reform and are the areas in which opportunity and vulnerability most prominently exist. Attention by policymakers to these constructed understandings of intended beneficiaries will help determine the future of land and agrarian reform; as individuals directly impacted by land and agrarian reform policies, farmers and extension officers can help productively steer appropriate and responsive policy decisions in the future.

The results of this study indicate a complex reality for the individuals immediately affected by land and agrarian reform in Limpopo Province. Some farmers, on both communal land and land formerly owned by whites, have followed the script envisioned by MLAR supporters. Through government grants and loans, they have secured land and established agricultural operations that are likely to be commercially viable. Others, however, represent the failed or failing majority of land and agrarian reform projects. Their financial dependency on the government, coupled with unrealistic business plans, provide further evidence for those who claim that land reform in South Africa needs a new approach. Most of the individuals who flooded farms after 1994 are long gone. The required hard work, dedication to continuing education, and access to information presented challenges too daunting to overcome.

As the policy debates continue, farmers and agricultural extension will need to continue to navigate the difficult landscape of land and agrarian reform. From the data collected in this study, several important themes emerged that help give meaning to the agrarian reform experiences of farmers and extension officers. First, both groups emphasized the dominant role that government support has come to fill for emerging black farmers. For farmers to develop their operations so that they are commercially viable, agricultural extension and the farmers with whom they work need to develop strategies to avoid unhealthy dependence. Secondly, both groups recognized enhanced knowledge and skill sets as essential for success. Many of the research participants valued opportunities for learning and identified new skill sets that they needed to improve for the future. Thirdly, participants indicated that access to market opportunities, business relationships, information sources, and other types of support were important for long-term economic feasibility. These types of networks

are a social infrastructure that agricultural extension and farmers should work to strengthen. Finally, business viability frequently entered conversation with both farmers and extension officers. While some of the farmers were in the process of successfully integrating their operations into markets, others were struggling or had unrealistic expectations.

The failing projects provide evidence for critics of MLAR in South Africa. The government, interested in maintaining a strong agricultural sector, has not generally encouraged the subdivision of large land tracts, which, according to Lahiff (2007):

is arguably the single greatest contributor to the failure and general underperformance of land reform projects, as it not only foists inappropriate sizes of farms on people (and absorbs too much of their grants in the process) but also forces them to work in groups, whether they wish to do so or not (p. 1588).

Business plans are often developed by government agents or consultants, who pursue highly efficient and productive models that require substantial investment, even when the beneficiaries lack the stability to make such plans come to fruition (Lahiff, 2007). The participants in this study were no doubt influenced by the emphasis on large-scale commercial operations, even when it seemed unfeasible. Success to them meant expanding their holdings, intensifying their production, and successfully competing in domestic and global markets. For some, these visions will become a reality, but for others they are unrealistic goals that all but assure failure.

Recommendations and Implications

While this study was exploratory, several implications and recommendations

emerge from the findings. Perhaps the most critical recommendation is to encourage agricultural extension to include farmers in the earliest stages of planning. Working together in the very initial stages might help to temper unrealistic expectations related to marketing and land productivity. Early interaction will also help extension understand the educational needs of emerging farmers. Performing a needs assessment together will help both groups negotiate realistic perspectives on viable project outcomes. Doing so will likely require indicators for success other than commercial viability in national or export markets. Although the government has been reluctant to subdivide large land tracts, agricultural development must do more than maintain the highly advanced commercial sector that necessarily limits its number of participants. The degree of agrarian inequality that continues to exist indicates a need to incorporate alternative models for agricultural development.

Including farmers into the planning process can also be beneficial to begin to address government dependency. Together, extension officers and farmers can iteratively develop individualized plans that outline the extent to which government support will continue to play a role. By doing so, a clear understanding between both parties can emerge regarding government capacity to provide future support. Although this is not likely to end the problem of dependency, it will explicitly enter dependency into the conversation between agricultural extension and beneficiaries. In addition, by co-generating realistic goals and outcomes, these plans can serve as excellent starting points for amount of money accessed through grants and loans. Discovering variables that influence project success will help extension tailor realistic business plans for farmers.

agricultural extension to enhance its monitoring and evaluation of their agricultural development projects.

As the development of business plans occurs, agricultural extension must emphasize the importance of other types of support beyond buildings, materials, and technology. Educational support and training opportunities must emerge as an integral aspect of agricultural development to ensure that emerging farmers not only have land and tools but also the ability to succeed. In addition, agricultural extension should incorporate the development of social and informational networks into its work. Pursuing frameworks that recognize that social, natural, and human assets are vital to development will help guide agriculture extension in efforts to build new and strengthen existing networks (Dani & Moser, 2008; Scoones, 1998). Doing so would likely further address dependency issues by connecting farmers with other sources of opportunity and support.

From a research perspective, this study must be understood as exploratory. More comprehensive studies with larger sample sizes in both Limpopo Province and elsewhere must be conducted to further explore the challenges and opportunities facing farmers and agricultural extension. Qualitative studies should use the themes identified in this study as starting points and also pursue more nuanced understandings of how social, economic, and political dynamics change as updated policies are enacted. Quantitative elements should be incorporated to better understand success and failure rates of reform projects based on size of land occupancy, type of land (communal or formerly white-owned), amount of technical training received, and

These recommendations are made with a full awareness of the complexities and challenges of land and agrarian reform in post-apartheid South Africa. The viability for many of the suggestions will depend on political

deliberations, which are, in turn, intertwined with global structures far beyond the sphere of emerging black farmers and agricultural extension officers in Limpopo Province. Nonetheless, while policymakers debate paths forward, the actual experiences of the farmers on the ground provide an entirely different perspective, for they are the ones living the consequences – good or bad – of reform policies. Continuing to value these types of perspectives can at least make available important information to policymakers for them to make decisions responsive to the material realities of the farmers who are the targeted beneficiaries.

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