

VERIFICATION OF THE EXISTENCE OF FOOD SECURITY PROJECTS IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA.

Nesengani, T. J.,¹¹ Mudau, M. J.¹² & Netshandama, V. O.¹³

Correspondence Author: T. J. Nesengani – Email: nesenganitj@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Food Security Projects initiated by the government of South Africa in order to help alleviate poverty within Limpopo Province have proved unsustainable and difficult to provide for what they were mandated to provide to the satisfaction of the government, which is to create jobs and alleviate poverty. The purpose of this study is to verify the existence of food security projects in Limpopo province of South Africa. The study was conducted in all the five districts of Limpopo Province, namely; Mopani, Vhembe, Capricorn, Sekhukhune, and Waterberg. Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews which were administered to one official from the Provincial Department of Health and Social Development, one official from the Department of Agriculture and five tribal council representatives who represented all the tribal authorities at district level and are knowledgeable about developmental issues. Document analysis was also conducted at the two provincial departments. The coded data was then analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 22). Frequency tables and charts were computed on a computer spreadsheet. The findings of this Study revealed that there are 347 food security projects in Limpopo Province with 338 declared functional. This Study will provide policy makers with policy directives on how a database of food security projects can be kept so that they can be known.

Keywords: Food Security projects; Poverty alleviation; Functional, Dysfunctional.

1. INTRODUCTION

Agricultural growth has traditionally been regarded as important for poverty reduction because rural poverty represents the major share of total poverty in most developing countries and agriculture is a major source of income for poor urban and rural households (Bresciani & Croppenstedt, 2006).

The food security projects in Limpopo province produces different commodities, depending on the demographic area in which they are found. Although the people of Limpopo province depends in one way or another on farming as a way of living, there is a challenge that food security projects are facing such as climate change that affects production. Wlokas (2008), postulates that Africa is one of the most vulnerable continents to climate change and variability, because of multiple stresses and low adaptive capacity. South Africa is going to become generally drier and warmer through climate change, agriculture is one sector which is going to be severely affected by climate change.

¹¹ University of Venda, Institute for Rural Development. P/Bag X5050, THOHOYANDOU, 0950.

¹² University of Venda, Univen Income Generation Centre (UIGC). P/Bag X5050, THOHOYANDOU, 0950, Email: John.Mudau@univen.ac.za.

¹³ University of Venda, Community Engagement. P/Bag X5050, THOHOYANDOU, 0950: Email: Vhonani.Netshandama@univen.ac.za.

The study was based on the verification the existence of food security projects in Limpopo Province of South Africa. The study verified the existence of food security projects in all the districts of Limpopo province and appropriate recommendations were made to the policy makers in order to persuade the custodians of food security projects to create their database.

The objective of this study was to investigate whether there was an updated food security projects database. Officials in the Department of Health and Social Development, Department of Agriculture and the Tribal Council representatives at district level were approached and recruited for interviews. The interviews focused on verifying the existence of the food security projects and their level of functionality and dysfunctionality, and the kind of support the projects are getting from the departments and tribal councils. In addition to the interviews, available documents and evidence of existing projects were sought for the purpose of preparing for the verification on site. Notes were thus taken from the documents for verification purposes.

2. DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM

Food security projects in Limpopo Province were initiated in order to help alleviate poverty among the rural and urban unemployed population. The two major funding departments, namely; the Department of Health and Social Development and the Department of Agriculture initiated the establishment of food security projects, but it was discovered that they too have lost track of the entities they have helped to establish. It became difficult to speculate that food security projects were helping in alleviating poverty if there were no proper records of all the food security projects.

3. METHODOLOGY

A mixed model approach was used in this study. Sampling was done whereby it is believed that a sample is actually a subset of the population. It includes groups of people, events, behaviours or other elements on which to conduct a study. Researchers usually work with samples rather than working with the total population because it is more economical and practical to do so, and it is possible to obtain reasonably good information from a sample (Burns & Grove, 2009; Polit & Beck, 2010).

The research participants that were engaged in this study were purposively chosen to represent the food security projects, the officials of the department of health and social development and the department of agriculture respectively and the tribal council representatives were purposively sampled. Semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 2 officials at provincial department of health and social development and agriculture respectively and 5 tribal council representatives from each district. The questionnaire covered the following themes, namely; Biographic data of respondents, types of food security projects, functional and dysfunctional food security projects, funding agencies, mandates of food security projects, contributions to the livelihoods, the relationships between food security projects beneficiaries and community members, and support by government and tribal councils. Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.

4. FINDINGS

The research findings are presented by highlighting the gender proportion of key participants, the types of food security projects per district, and by highlighting the functional and dysfunctional food security projects in the province. The available documents and evidence of existing projects were sought for the purpose of preparing for the verification on site. Notes were thus taken from the documents for verification purposes.

4.1 Gender proportions and number of service of provincial officials and leaders

This study has shown that the gender proportion of provincial officials and leaders varied, the gender proportion of male indicated was 57.1% and for female was 42.9%. This study further revealed that the years of service for provincial officials and leaders were also not the same; the study indicated that those between 6-10 years had 28.6% and those with 16 years and above had 71.4% years' experience.

4.2 Types of food security projects per district

This study confirms that food security projects are located everywhere in Limpopo Province; they vary in number and type. The study shows that in Mopani district alone, there are 130 vegetable projects and 36 broiler projects. Vhembe district comes second with 43 vegetable projects after Mopani district. Waterberg district also showed a high number of food security projects on the list with 36 vegetable projects. The types and number of food security projects are shown in Figure 1 below:

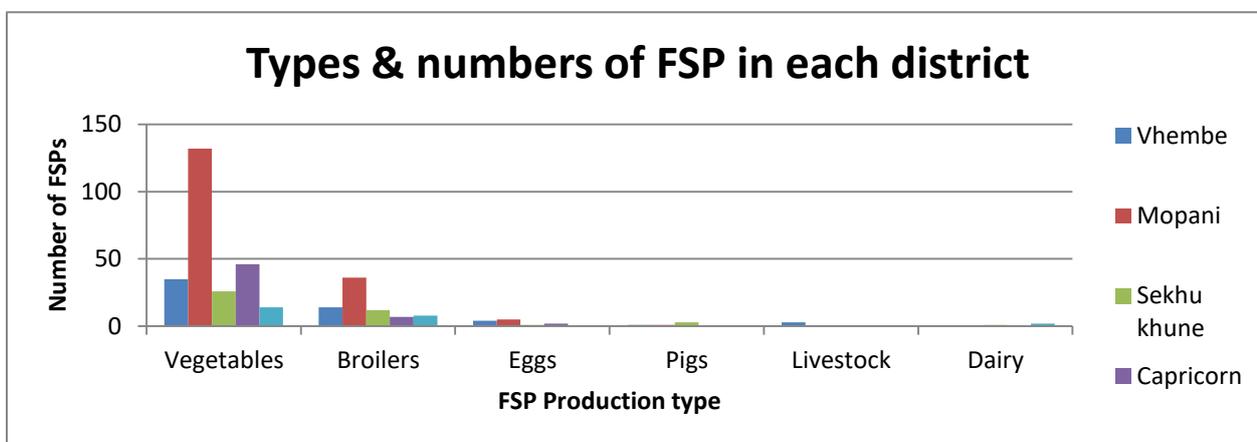


Figure 1: Types and numbers of food security projects in each district of Limpopo Province.

4.3 Functional food security projects

The informants in this Study confirmed that 347 Food Security Projects are in existence with 338 declared functional; the main problem was that they are not in a database that can be traced from the funding departments. During the visits to those sites, Food Security Projects were generally found to be functional, some to the point where they needed additional space to increase their operations. Mopani district has more functional projects than other districts. Figure 2 bears testimony to the food security projects in Limpopo Province.

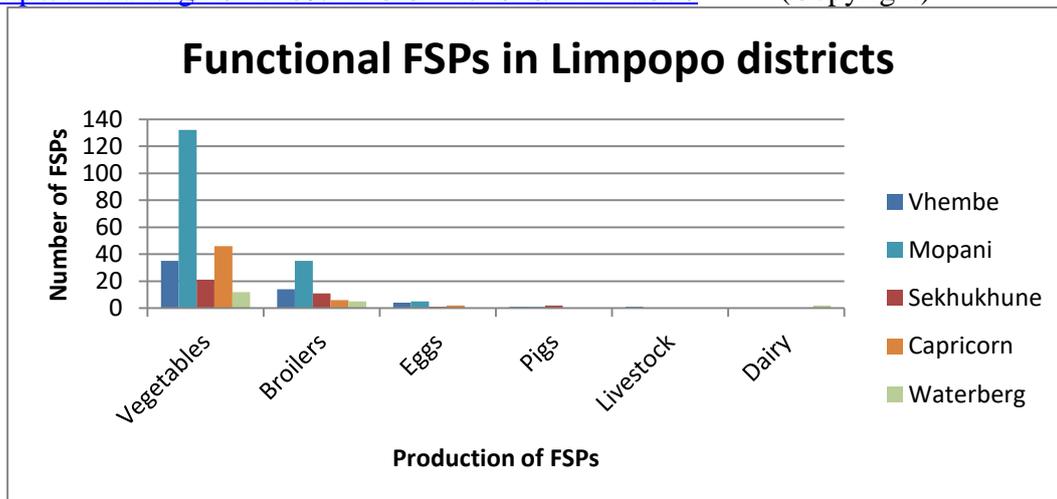


Figure 2: Functional Food Security Projects in Limpopo districts

4.4 Dysfunctional Food Security Projects

In this study it was discovered that from a list of all the Food Security Projects, there were 9 that were dysfunctional. Their dysfunctionality was as a result of lack of skills and the mismanagement of funds meant for inputs and other logistics. The supposed beneficiaries of such projects tend to mismanage funds mainly because: they pay each other at the ends of the months using funds not allocated for salaries. Instead of investing in profit-raising strategies, they use the available money for paying salaries.

4.5 Funders of Food Security Projects

During the interviews with informants it emerged that the principal funders of the food security projects were the Department of Health and Social Development (DHSD), the Department of Agriculture, the Independent Development Trust (IDT), the Amalgamated Banks of South Africa (ABSA) and the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Program (CASP).

4.6 Mandate by which Food Security Projects are made to operate within

The study revealed that the Food Security Projects have a mandate to fulfil; that of creating jobs and providing food for beneficiaries and for the community members. During the interviews, the reasons why the food security projects were established and for which mandates were recorded. The study shows that 18% of informants have said that the food security projects were providing food for the beneficiaries and for the communities. Respectively, 82% of informants have said that the food security projects have created employment for their members.

4.7 Relationships between Food Security Project beneficiaries and community members.

As a general test the study was employed to measure the relationship between food security project beneficiaries and community members, a Likert scale was used to determine the relationship that exists in the following scale:

Unsatisfactory	Average	Above average	Very much above average

- A total of 14.5% rated the relationship as unsatisfactory
- A total of 42.4% rated the relationship as average
- A total of 28.6% rated the relationship as above average
- A total of 14.5% rated the relationship as very much above average

4.8 Support by Government and Tribal Councils

This study indicated that about 57.1% of informants have said that the tribal councils would give extra land to food security projects if they promise to increase their production. While about 14.3% of informants' believed the government will assist in funding of projects, link them with markets and give encouragement to the food security projects to produce more.

5. DISCUSSIONS

Food security projects in Limpopo Province were established with the aim of alleviating poverty as cited by DOA (2002). Zwane (2012), stresses that successful food security and poverty-oriented programmes do not only assist poor rural populations to produce more and diversified products, but to produce a surplus that can be marketed and thereby generate income for the purposes of improving quality of life through improved diet and nutrition. The study further revealed that the food security projects which were initiated by the government of South Africa were aimed at poverty reduction (Bresciani & Croppenstedt, 2006). According to Policy Brief (2013) agriculture is the major source of income for poor rural households. The study indicated that the mandate by which food security projects were made to operate from within was achieved; this was confirmed by 82% of informants who have said that the establishments of food security projects have helped the beneficiaries in terms of job creation and contributed to their livelihoods.

Poverty and food insecurity in South Africa is the result of several centuries of colonial and apartheid policies, designed specifically to create general conditions unfavourable to the well-being of black people in all its aspects, especially in the former homelands (DOA, 2002). This study indicated that the government has looked down upon the food security projects in Limpopo province. The department of health and social development and the department of agriculture documents in Limpopo province have shown that there were 138 food security projects in all the districts of Limpopo Province. However; after this study it was discovered that there are 347 food security projects in the province, of which 338 were declared functional.

Mopani district was found to be the district in Limpopo Province with the most food security projects (184). Vhembe district comes second with 57 and Capricorn 55, Sekhukhune and Waterberg with 39 and 23 food security projects respectively. Mudau and Netshandama (2012) hinted that food security projects were established to achieve among other things the following:

- Increased household food production and trading
- Improved income generation and job creation opportunities

- Improved nutrition and food safety
- Increased safety nets and food emergency management systems
- Provide capacity building

In Mopani district people saw the establishment of food security projects as an answer to job creation and food security challenges. Bernstein (1994) contends that food security creates adequate and secure entitlements as the core concern of development strategy which requires a wide-range of public support.

The study has shown that South Africa has devised a National Integrated Food Security Strategy (IFSS) (Human Sciences Research Council, 2004) which declared its primary objective to be the overcoming of rural food insecurity by increasing the participation of food-insecure households in productive agriculture and providing financial assistance to projects. This is to show support of the food security projects by the government whereas the leaders have committed themselves by giving extra land.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The verification of the existence of food security projects were done in order to map and profile them. The study highlighted the funding agencies of food security projects as being dominated by the Limpopo government departments, the Department of Health and Social Development and the Department of Agriculture were the principal funders of food security projects. The study also showed the contribution to the livelihood of the communities, and the mandates within which the food security projects were meant to be operating from. This study further revealed that the way food security projects were contributing to the livelihoods of the communities, beneficiaries of food security projects felt that they were employed like other people because they wake up each day and go to work, they further maintain that they even get paid at the end of the months even though the salary was not market related. The aim of this study was also to create awareness to the policy makers and extension service about the food security projects which are not properly mapped and profiled in Limpopo Province.

The following are the recommendations to the policy makers and extension service:

- a) Monitoring and evaluation of food security projects: the study is recommending that a careful monitoring and evaluation is crucial. If the food security projects are funded so as to ensure that funds are used in an appropriate manner. Evaluation would also help the extension service to see to it that projects are working efficiently. However, monitoring would help to receive feedback or the degree to which the projects operates (Lunga, 2011).
- b) Mapping and profiling of food security projects: the aim of this study was to verify the existence of food security projects in Limpopo Province if they were properly mapped and profiled, so it becomes difficult for donors to keep track of the projects that they have initially funded. In this study it is recommended that the extension service create a database of all functional and dysfunctional food security projects in the districts.
- c) The extension service to work collaboratively with the colleges of agriculture to provide capacity building to beneficiaries of food security projects.

Food security projects in Limpopo province were established with the aim of alleviating poverty through job creation, however; the existence of food security projects should be

known so that proper monitoring and evaluation can be carried out effectively. As poverty knows no boundaries, the authors recommend that further study be conducted in other provinces of the Republic of South Africa to map and profile all the existing food security projects which were established with the aim of creating employment and alleviating poverty. In addition, collaborative engagement is needed between the extension service and colleges of agriculture to provide after-care services.

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