

Farmer Perceptions on Empowerment Programs by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Gauteng Province, South Africa

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KEYWORDS Agricultural Sector. Municipalities. Empowerment Programs. Support Intervention. Support Agent

ABSTRACT The study investigated the perceptions of farmers supported by empowerment programs by the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (GDARD) with a focus on their understanding of empowerment in agriculture and on selected aspects of empowerment programs. Program beneficiaries were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire. Majority (59%) of farmers perceived soft (intangible) issues (consultation 29%, education and training 26%, and market access 4%) to be important determinants of empowerment. Only one in three (35%) farmers mentioned hard (tangible) issues of provision of infrastructure and equipment (14%), land reform (14%), and agricultural input supply (7%) to be important determinants of empowerment. Majority (64.3%) of farmers had negative perceptions on policy frameworks, and only one in three (35.7%) perceived the policies to be good. Support interventions of empowerment programs should prioritize soft issues such as consultation, information, counseling, advice, training, and market assessment.