

Assessment of Decision-making in Rural Irrigation Schemes: A Case Study of Zanyokwe Smallholder Irrigation Scheme in Eastern Cape, South Africa

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ABSTRACT The researcher examined the farmers' participation in Zanyokwe smallholder irrigation scheme situated in Amathole district in Eastern Cape Province. The paper surveyed the households' willingness to continue participation in smallholder irrigation. The specific objectives of the study were to investigate the determinants of participation in the smallholder irrigation scheme, and to examine the relationship between household and farm characteristics. The paper adopted and used focus group discussions, structured and semi-structured questionnaires, interviews, observation and field measurement. The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The result shows that six out of twelve independent variables were found to be significant in explaining the households' choice to participate in the Zanyokwe smallholder irrigation scheme. The independent variables significant in the scheme were farm experience, farm asset, land rights, water sufficiency, marketing information, and produce variation/ yield gap, and the paper observed that there was general apathy towards the scheme owing to low crop yield. The average size of the food plots was grossly inadequate for households to realize higher production output. The paper concludes that training of beneficiaries on maintenance of farm infrastructures should be encouraged, and the marginal positive effect of increasing land size of beneficiaries will enhance participation in the scheme.