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J Hum Ecol, 59(2-3): 130-137 (2017)
DOI: 10.1080/09709274.2017.1305612

Factors Affecting Market Participation for Horticultural Projects: A Case of Smallholder Farmers in Alfred Nzo District Municipality in Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

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KEYWORDS Market Participation. Horticultural Project. Alfred Nzo District Municipality. Eastern Cape. South Africa

ABSTRACT This paper highlighted the factors affecting market participation by rural smallholder farmers in Alfred Nzo District Municipality. To date, there was no clear assessment done on the horticultural projects within the district to identify contributing factors to poor market participation by smallholder farmers. Project assessment was conducted in Alfred Nzo District by Agricultural Research Council (ARC) in collaboration with the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) with attempt to identify market needs in the district. A total of 48 horticultural projects participated in the study and were from the following local municipalities: Umzimvubu, Matatiele, Ntabankulu and Bizana. Quantitative and qualitative design was used as a detailed questionnaire written in English, with a focus group discussion, a stakeholder's discussion and field observations as part of the data collection. A purposive sampling technique was used to select forty-eight (48) projects, in order to cover uniformity and homogenous characteristics such as infrastructure requirements, skills availability, production challenges, agricultural training needs, water source needs, educational level, market availability and other factors. Data was coded, captured, and analysed using SPSS. The following analysis were conducted: Descriptive and Univariate regressions. The results showed positive association among the following variables: age, gender, educational level, farming experience, land size, crop planted, water source, agricultural training. The results showed that there are major factors hindering market participation like long distance to market, lack of knowledge and inputs as well as lack of irrigation and equipment. It is evident that interventions should be implemented focusing on three identified major challenges faced by farmers in order to improve market participation by smallholder farmers.