

Status of Food Security Projects and the Challenges that Contributed to Their Dysfunctionality in the Rural Communities of Limpopo Province, South Africa

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ABSTRACT Food security projects launched by the South African government to assist reduce poverty in the districts of Limpopo Province have shown to be unsustainable and ineffective at addressing food security at the grassroots level. This research was carried out as a follow-up to Nesengani et al.'s 2016 study. The goal of this research is to find out how far these projects have progressed in terms of their functions. Data in order to learn more about the status of food security projects' and challenges that contributed to their dysfunctionality and their assessment was gathered from the five districts of Limpopo Province. SPSS was used to examine the data. The outcomes of this study show that the most successful food security projects are those that did not meddle with earnings; members either share 30 percent of sales profits or do not share at all. The report provides policymakers with recommendations on how to support, monitor, and evaluate food security projects across the length and breadth of Limpopo province.

INTRODUCTION

Food security is defined as “a scenario in which all people have physical, social, and economic access to enough, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food choices for an active and healthy life at all times” (Peng and Berry 2018), whereas food security was defined as “the state of being able to feed oneself and one’s family” at the 1996 World Food Summit. The food system would suffer if the economy of African countries suffers as a result of COVID-19. Members of the egg layer projects in the Vhembe district were aware of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the government regulations that go with it (Laborde et al. 2020). These regulations, especially the Amended Directions on the movement of persons and goods, have affected their projects because people’s movements were restricted (Nesengani and Yusuf 2020: 196).

Whilst South Africa is food secure at national level, the country is still food insecure at household level as not all households have access to adequate food (Statistics SA 2017). Its position of 44th out of 133 countries demonstrates how it compares to countries on other continents in terms of food affordability, availability, quality, and safety. Climate change, according to Wlokas (2008), will make Africa drier and warm-

er, having a substantial influence on agriculture in the next years.

The Republic of South Africa’s Constitution states that everyone has the right to enough food and water, and that the state must ensure that this right is fulfilled through law and other means, within its resources. South Africa’s government has launched food security projects to assist reduce poverty and improve food security. Different commodities are produced by Limpopo Province’s food security projects. South Africa’s democratic government inherited major service delivery backlogs when it came to office in 1994. People lived in abysmal poverty throughout the apartheid years, which was exacerbated by large retrenchments that happened when most international mining corporations went down, forcing migrant laborers to return to their birthplaces and start over. Capricorn, Mopani, Sekhukhune, Vhembe, and Waterberg are the five districts that make up Limpopo Province, which is primarily rural. Figure 1 shows the twenty-five municipalities in these districts.

According to a study by Nesengani et al. (2016: 119), the Department of Health and Social Development funded 138 food security projects across Limpopo Province’s districts in order to relieve poverty among the province’s unemployed population. According to Nesengani et al. (2016: 119), these food security projects were



Fig. 1. The districts of Limpopo Province, South Africa, are depicted on this map

Source: Mytown.afriwx.co.za

created to serve as economic empowerment programs and a means of assisting communities in becoming financially self-sufficient. These authors emphasize that these projects were formed out of a desperate need, as people were starving on a regular basis.

Despite the fact that some food security projects are performing exceptionally well, many of them have yet to achieve the objectives for which they were formed. Theft and vandalism of property are two of the most apparent of these concerns. The aim of this study is to investigate the status and challenges that contributed to their dysfunctionality in the rural areas of Limpopo Province, South Africa.

Objectives

This study was conducted as a follow-up to the study conducted by Nesengani et al (2016), to analyze and assess the current status and challenges contributing to their dysfunctionality five years following the previous study was

conducted. The present study aims to fulfil the following two objectives:

- ♦ To assess progress of the food security projects compared to the agricultural food security projects studied five years ago.
- ♦ To investigate the status and challenges contributing to their dysfunctionality in the rural communities of Limpopo Province.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was based on the researchers' rigorous primary data collection using questionnaires as well as secondary data collection. Structured field interviews with 15 project members and 9 extension officers were conducted in Limpopo province districts to obtain primary data to compare progress of food security projects to agricultural food security projects studied five years ago by the same authors and to investigate the status and challenges contributing to food security project dysfunctionality. Specific questions focused on the existing state of affairs and the issues that contribute to their dys-

functionality, as well as their impact on communities and the effectiveness of their interventions. According to Bless et al. (2013), sampling is a technique for rationalizing data collection by determining the best way to limit the set of objects, people, or events from which the actual data is gathered. To find participants in each initiative, this study used purposeful sampling, also known as judgmental sampling. In Nesengani et al. (2016: 56) study on “verifications of the existence of food security projects in Limpopo province,” all 138 food security projects were spread out over the five districts of Vhembe, Mopani, Capricorn, Sekhukhune, and Waterberg. The objective for stratifying these 15 food security projects was to focus on the government’s most recent generation of food security projects in order to assess them because they have never been assessed in the preceding five years. Furthermore, all 15 chairpersons or secretaries (1 from each food security initiative) and 9 extension employees who took part in this study were chosen using purposive sampling as shown in Table 1. These individuals were chosen for the study because they were thought to be experts on the subject and the most likely to answer the pre-determined questions.

Table 1: Purposive selection of extension officers representing food security projects at districts

<i>District</i>	<i>No. of projects</i>	<i>No. of extension officers</i>
Vhembe	6	2
Mopani	3	2
Sekhukhune	1	1
Capricorn	4	3
Waterberg	1	1
Total	15	9

The quantitative data collected, such as the number of food security projects experiencing challenges in the districts, was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) for Windows, version 14.0. Other statistical computations and regression analysis were carried out.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Seventy-five percent of the world’s poor reside in rural areas, with agriculture being their

primary source of income (Raidimi 2014: 10). Agriculture is still important in the twenty-first century for economic growth, poverty reduction, and environmental sustainability. In Limpopo Province, there were 138 food security projects in rural communities (Dept. of Health and Welfare 2002; Nesengani et al. 2016). According to Mudau (in Marais et al. 2001: 385), the Department of Health and Social Development initiated 60 percent of the activities, and food security projects participants were expected to do relatively little in these circumstances. They were just advised to create a committee and get together. The projects include vegetable, dairy, broiler and piggery production. When assessed, it was discovered that some food security projects were unsuccessful because the contributions made by participants were not enough to ensure programme survival. Some tended to degenerate as projects, and became seen as cash cows for the receiving of salaries for beneficiaries. Table 2 shows successful and unsuccessful projects in the municipalities of Limpopo province. The most successful projects are those that do not meddle with profits and instead invest them back into the food security programme or distribute them equitably among members (Nesengani et al. 2016: 118). Members receive nothing from such projects because there is no profit and nothing to distribute.

Overall, somewhat more than half of the food security projects sampled in the districts succeed, while slightly less than half fail. Table 2 depicts food security projects that were successful were those that were running well in terms of production and sales, whereas those that were failing were those that were unable to produce due to a shortage of cash since revenues had been dealt with, according to this study. There are two successful and one unsuccessful food security projects in the Vhembe district. One successful and one unsuccessful food security project has been implemented in the Mopani district. Capricorn district has one successful and one unsuccessful food security programme, Sekhukhune district has only one successful food security programme, and Waterberg district has one unsuccessful food security project. Vegetables are grown in two-thirds of the food security projects. Two of the six vegetable-only food security projects are unsuccessful

Table 2: Successful and struggling food security projects in the districts of Limpopo Province

<i>District</i>	<i>Municipality</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>Status of project</i>	<i>Respondents</i>
1. Vhembe	Mutale, Musina and Thulamela	1. Madimbo Vegetable garden. 2. Bale Vegetable Garden. 3. Tshitomboni poultry and community garden	1. Successful 2. Successful 3. Struggling	3 1 2
2. Mopani	Greater Letaba	1. Nahakwe Vegetable project 2. Malematja vegetable project	1. Successful 2. Struggling	2 1
3. Capricorn	Senwabarwana and Polokwane	1. Avon vegetable project. 2. Bahlaloka botanical garden	1. Successful 2. Struggling	2 2
4. Sekhukhune	Greater Tubatse	1. Taung gardening project	1. Successful	1
5. Waterberg	Lephalale	1. Etla re Jeng vegetable project	1. Struggling	1

ful. Two of Mopani's three vegetable projects were unsuccessful. Only four (4) of the nine (9) vegetable food security projects in Limpopo's regions were determined to be unsuccessful. Overall, the findings appear to indicate that vegetable gardens outperform other forms of food security projects. This analysis also shows that there were both successful and unsuccessful food security projects in Limpopo Province, as shown below:

Functional and Dysfunctional Food Security Projects at the Districts of Limpopo Province

South Africa still lacks established and accepted procedures for evaluating food security, and no regulated system exists to monitor the population's food security position (De Cock et al. 2013: 269). A previous government survey found 347 food security projects, with 338 of them designated functional. The largest concern in 2016 was the lack of a central database for food security projects (Nesengani et al. 2016: 55). The participants in the food security projects were largely women, between the ages of 46 and 60, with limited formal education; all had only completed Grade 10 certificate.

According to the extension officers interviewed, many food security projects were found to be doing well, with some even needing more space to expand their activities. Expert members ensured that the food security projects went off without a hitch. According to the extension staff interviewed, several food security projects were improving in terms of production and were regarded as functional. Others were making good use of the Tribal Council's limited resources,

while others needed more space to develop their farming enterprises. In light of this, the National Development Agency (NDA) (2013), finds that subsistence and smallholder farming are key sources of food security for many South African households. The study revealed that some food security projects are on dry terrain and rely on rainfall for production, but they nonetheless collect enormous amounts of harvest. The study further revealed that other food security projects are located near rivers and, although they are functional, they have substantial electricity costs due to the need to run electrical pumps. The participants of the study also revealed that the some food security projects are likely to be forced to close if they do not manage their food security projects adequately due to their inability to pay their expensive electrical bills.

It was discovered that whether or not food security projects were functional had little to do with whether or not they were listed in a database of sponsored projects — many were well-known to department officials yet remain unproductive. The projects' functionality were due entirely to hard labor and meticulous planning. Table 3 shows the province's functional food security projects.

Table 3 demonstrates that there are numerous vegetable projects in Limpopo's districts that are existing and functional, particularly in Mopani, which has 130 vegetable food security projects in comparison to all other food security projects. In this investigation, it was also discovered that there are more broiler food security projects than other food security projects, with Mopani alone having 36, Vhembe having 16, and Sekhukhune having 15 food security projects,

Table 3: Existing and Functional Food Security Projects (FSPs) in Limpopo Province

<i>Food security projects</i>	<i>Vhembe</i>	<i>Mopani</i>	<i>Sekhukhune</i>	<i>Capricorn</i>	<i>Waterberg</i>
Vegetables	35	130	20	44	15
Broilers	16	36	15	10	9
Eggs	5	7	2	3	0
Livestock	2	3	3	1	4
Dairy	0	0	0	0	2
Botanical garden	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Computed from data obtained from Nesengani and Yusuf (2020)

respectively. The food security projects' profiles are now available at the department database (Department of Health and Welfare 2002; Nesengani et al. 2016: 53); the information on the database assisted the authors to get the number of food security projects per district. During the visit to the districts by the authors, extension officers stated that many food security projects were dysfunctional, but that they did exist (Table 4). Members of these food security projects mishandled cash that was supposed to be used for equipment and running expenditures but were instead used for salary. When asked why these projects failed, extension officers stated that the members lacked the necessary skills to manage the resources needed to make their food security projects sustainable. Shortage of water, a lack of expertise, a lack of stable markets, and people stealing vegetables were among the other reasons stated. Members became enraged as a result of all of this.

It was observed that the structural processes of functional and dysfunctional food security projects are same. Extension personnel urged participants to organize a committee to monitor the food security projects' day-to-day activities when they started a food security initiative. Their management training for food security projects would therefore be determined by their baseline

skill and knowledge levels. The fact that the structural operations of the functional and dysfunctional food security projects were identical emphasizes the importance of other traits such as commitment, hard work, skill, and so on in determining whether a food security projects was functional or not. The study also found that participants in food security projects required basic skills such as bookkeeping.

The failure of food security projects was assessed to have an impact on households since members relied on these projects for extra income and food security (Nesengani et al. 2016: 52). Poor households, according to the DOA (2002), have few income earners and a large number of dependents. Table 4 shows the number of failed food security programs in Limpopo Province.

Challenges that Contributed to the Dysfunctionality of Food Security Projects in Limpopo Province

Nine significant problems were identified in this study as contributing to the failure of food security projects. Three types of food security projects were determined to be dysfunctional: vegetable, poultry, and botanical gardens. The study discovered that the most functional food security projects are those that do not mess with

Table 4: Dysfunctional food security projects in Limpopo Province

<i>Food security projects</i>	<i>Vhembe</i>	<i>Mopani</i>	<i>Sekhukhune</i>	<i>Capricorn</i>	<i>Waterberg</i>
Vegetables	0	0	20	0	20
Broilers	0	10	10	10	0
Eggs	0	0	0	0	0
Pigs	0	0	10	0	0
Livestock	2	0	0	0	0
Botanical garden	0	0	0	1	0

Source: Computed from data obtained from Nesengani et al. (2016)

earnings, which was validated by extension officials during interviews. Some food security projects have failed due to the following stated challenges:

- ♦ Drought
- ♦ Vandalism of property
- ♦ Theft of profit and commodities by community and members of projects
- ♦ Funders/donors not responding to their proposals, i.e. funding found to be not according to their request. (For instance, where a project required equipment for broiler production, it was given piggery production equipment instead.)
- ♦ Shortage of water
- ♦ Lack of market for commodities
- ♦ Expensive transport for conveying commodities to the market
- ♦ Inability to pay for electricity and
- ♦ Projects are situated far away from the villages, making them vulnerable to theft.

In their study of food security projects in Limpopo Province, Nesengani et al. (2016: 119), discovered 347 food security projects, 338 of which were effective. Many of the issues listed in table 4 were applicable to these faulty food security projects. Their ineffectiveness was mostly due to a lack of skills among the members and the mishandling of monies intended for food security projects investment. Members of such food security projects mishandled funds granted to them by the department of health and social development during the start-up of food security projects by monthly salaries without taking into account earnings instead of investing profit. Furthermore, rather than real food security projects, some tended to degrade into food security projects where members were collectively liable for profit-making members who lacked the skills essential to run a business. Despite these issues, officials from the provincial department of health and social development acknowledged in this survey that a significant percentage of food security projects were boosting their production. Some required more land to expand their farming operations, while others were making good use of the Tribal Council's limited resources. The food security projects' effectiveness was discovered to be ineffective. It was interesting that when asked, many of the food security initiative members could not ex-

plain why they got involved in food security projects activities. When asked why they got involved in food security projects activities, many of the food security projects members couldn't explain why. Mudau (in Marais et al. 2001: 376), observed that food security projects were developed for a variety of reasons; However, 60 percent of the projects were begun by the National Nutrition and Social Development Programme (NNSDP), and in these circumstances, very little was required of the food security initiative members. They were just advised to create a committee and get together. Furthermore, 20 percent of respondents stated that the food security projects were designed to help local residents find work. According to Tshitangoni et al. (2010: 2381), fundamental skills and knowledge on the side of food security projects members are required for community projects to flourish. They go on to say that food security projects management, fundraising, financial management, and bookkeeping are all required abilities. According to the findings, over 90 percent of food security projects' participants needed training in bookkeeping in general.

CONCLUSION

Despite the fact that the province's Department of Agriculture now has fairly accurate records of food security projects in each area, many of them have failed, making it impossible to discern which are truly active and which are only operating in name. To find out, one must pay them a visit. According to the authors of this study, 90 percent of the participants in the food security projects need training in bookkeeping, marketing, financial management, and numerous technical elements of production. Food security projects will have a better chance of being effective with such trainings. Another clear reason for their failure is that the members do not take the food security projects seriously; they lack dedication and sincerity in what they do or try to do. This may explain why some food security projects succeed while others fail, despite having equivalent levels of technical skill. It's also worth noting that, prior to the interviews, the extension officers appeared to be completely oblivious of the difficulties that the food security projects were facing. Many food se-

curity projects appeared to be confronted with problems that members could have solved on their own if they had the appropriate desire and commitment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The authors of this study advise policymakers on how to support, monitor, and evaluate food security programs throughout Limpopo province. Extension officers should also establish a monitoring and evaluation system because food security projects take a lot of time and effort. Food security projects should not be given financial support until they have received significant training in bookkeeping, marketing, financial management, and technical elements of production, according to the authors. Extension officers and project committee members should collaborate to define the training requirements for participants in food security programs.

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