ACTION-DIALOGUE: OPPORTUNITIES, CONSTRAINTS AND INNOVATIVE APPROACHES IN SMALL-SCALE AGRICULTURE IN SOUTH AFRICA

GOEDGEDACHT, 6 – 8 AUGUST 2014
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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THIS GATHERING

Francis Wilson

In 2010 Francois Lategan and I organised an Agriculture Workshop at the Hunterstoun Centre at Hogsback in the Eastern Cape, to explore the new models of agriculture that are now being tried out or implemented in South Africa. We believed that there is much interesting work going on in the world of agriculture in this country about which academics and government policy makers know little or nothing.¹

Then, in 2012, Trevor Manuel in the Office of the President asked the University of Cape Town to bring together academics in the country to present their thoughts and research evidence on poverty. A call for papers produced more than 300 papers from 19 South African universities, and a conference in September 2012 discussed many of these papers.² The papers and discussion sessions were then compiled into a full conference report, and this has been published as a searchable online document.³

The conference papers and discussions produced a very rich mosaic of work being done on poverty and inequality by researchers based at universities and in projects across the country. What this mosaic revealed, amongst other things, was that there was masses of research and project activity focusing on some issues, such as early childhood development, and almost nothing on other areas, such as creating employment for young people. So one of the achievements of this conference was to show us both what we do know and what we know little or nothing about. Agriculture was one of the issues about which, it appeared, we knew very little – and yet the workshop in 2010 had shown us that there is lots of exciting and creative work going on in the agriculture sphere.

Two outcomes emerged from the 2012 conference:
1. The process of research and writing on poverty and inequality is going ahead.⁴

¹ Material from this workshop is available on request from Carnegie3, via the website http://www.carnegie3.org.za.
² A record of the conference can be found at http://www.carnegie3.org.za/conference.
³ The report is available at http://www.carnegie3.org.za/docs/Carnegie3_April13_WEB.pdf.
⁴ This work, continually updated, is available on the website www.econ3x3.org.
2. We also realised that, in terms of identifying the major dimensions of poverty and inequality in South Africa, enough research had been done, enough fact-finding – we needed to start developing practical strategies to deal with poverty and inequality, strategies to feed this research into contexts on the ground in ways that could stimulate action.

We therefore started developing what we’ve called ‘action dialogues’: gatherings of no more than 20–25 people, meeting for 3–5 days or even less, to focus on a particular theme that is central to their work. We’ve taken this approach because our sense is that bringing people together to talk directly to each other about their work, and to focus on one theme, can be very productive. We had one such workshop last year of church leaders who wanted to focus on education, a 2-day workshop out of which a good deal of work is going to grow. And earlier this year we had a more extended workshop on Worcester, involving people from the town and from around the country all exploring how to deal with the social and structural problems facing the community in Worcester. This has stimulated a welling up of energy at grassroots level to address these problems.

The action dialogue on small-scale agriculture is the third such initiative. We chose this focus because it is a vast and very important area that is not being dealt with adequately: we have massive land resources, we have water, and yet somehow the available resources are not coming together properly to strengthen this sector. With Ben Cousins, who holds a SARChI research chair in agrarian change and land reform and was the founder of the Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies Institute (PLAAS) at UWC, and Francois Lategan who was until recently in the Department of Agriculture at Fort Hare – two centres of research on agriculture in the country – we proposed bringing together academics involved in research into agriculture and the economy, practitioners who know what’s happening on the ground, and government people responsible for agricultural policy and policy implementation, to interact with each other.

The idea behind this gathering was that all participants should start by telling each other briefly about their work in projects, in policy development and implementation, or in researching this sector, and then focus on how to change the agricultural system (where it needs to be changed), and how to multiply existing successful projects, instead of constantly trying to reinvent the wheel – since there are plenty of good wheels already in existence in South Africa. The central issue that the participants were asked to focus on was how to change the system in which small-scale farmers function: how to enable the farmers to benefit from what is already being done to improve small-scale farming; and how government can use what has been learnt in these projects to make a difference to small-scale farming on a country-wide scale.
THE FORM OF THIS ACTION-DIALOGUE

Ben Cousins

The main dialogue we wanted to facilitate in this gathering is between people working in particular contexts who are having success on the ground, and learning from those experiences, and government people who have a different role – to change conditions in general for people who work on the ground. These are distinct roles that are complementary to one another, but we don’t often get the opportunity to bring these two groups of role players together. The aim of this action-dialogue was that practitioners should talk from the richness of their experience about what works, and why it works – and more importantly, about what it says to policy makers. And policy makers should listen to the practitioners and consider the question: what does this say to me about what I should be doing? How should policy be intervening to create a wider set of conditions in which the experience of these practitioners can multiply across the country? There is a mismatch between our agricultural policies and practices, and the idea of this gathering was to bring them onto the same page with each other.

The organisers of the action-dialogue sent out a questionnaire to practitioners asking them to answer the following questions:

▪ what larger opportunities and challenges does your experience tell us about?
▪ what are policy makers going to learn from your work?

We also asked some of the academic participants to write overviews about what the larger policy challenges are; these overviews were used to frame the debate and open up the dialogue. We were very concerned that the discussions among participants should move from the particular to the general in constructive ways; the dialogue was designed to move back and forth between the particular experiences of practitioners and commentaries by policy makers on these experiences.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This report contains all the papers and presentations given during the action-dialogue. The three framing papers by academics Wim van Averbeke, Michael Aliber and Ben Cousins are given in their complete form in Part I. The presentations by project representatives are given in Part II; the versions included in this report consist of detailed summaries, together with
selected diagrams, charts and photographs from the original PowerPoint presentations. Part III contains responses by government policy makers to the practitioners’ presentations, as well as a paper by Nick Vink on past and present farmer support programmes run by government.

Part IV draws together all the themes of the action-dialogue and identifies key challenges to be taken up by government policy makers, practitioners, researchers and all others concerned with the small-scale farming sector. A presentation by Michael Aliber sets out all the key issues that emerged in the course of the presentations; two presentations by representatives of Statistics South Africa and DataFirst at SALDRU consider the current data context for research and policy development in relation to small-scale farming; and a presentation on water challenges in South Africa draws this vital component of agriculture into the discussion framework. Part IV concludes with a set of recommendations for government, practitioners and researchers compiled by the participants in the action-dialogue.

Also included throughout the report are lightly edited, sometimes verbatim summaries of the discussions that followed presentations. These summaries, we hope, will give the reader some sense of the vibrant, challenging and collegial spirit in which the action-dialogue addressed itself to the question of how to strengthen the small-scale farming sector in South Africa.

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5 The complete PowerPoint presentations are available from www.carnegie3.org.za.
PART I: THE POLICY CHALLENGES

The first session of the action-dialogue consisted of three framing papers prepared by Professor Wim van Averbeke, Professor Michael Aliber and Professor Ben Cousins, presented by the authors and followed by discussion. All three papers addressed fundamental challenges facing agricultural policy makers in South Africa who want to support and increase the potential for small-scale farming to provide livelihoods. The presentations of the papers were also an invitation to the practitioners attending the action-dialogue to situate their own experience within the broader context of national agricultural conditions and policy realities, as these impact on small-scale farmers.

The full texts of the three papers are given below, together with summaries of the discussions that each presentation provoked.
THE POTENTIAL OF EXPANDING SMALLHOLDER IRRIGATION AS A CONTRIBUTION TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT, EMPLOYMENT CREATION AND POVERTY REDUCTION IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

Wim van Averbeke
Department of Crop Sciences, Tshwane University of Technology

Introduction
My objective with this short framing paper is to highlight important issues pertaining to the idea of expanding smallholder irrigation as an option to create livelihoods in rural and peri-urban areas of South Africa by means of an agrarian development pathway. In line with the terms of reference, I have made use of my personal experiences as a researcher who has worked in smallholder irrigation contexts for several years. These experiences were gained in the former homelands of the Eastern Cape (Ciskei and Transkei) and in the former Venda region (Vhembe District of Limpopo Province). I start the paper by pointing out the key benefits of irrigation in agriculture and its implications for farming systems and farm enterprise, which have been documented globally. In the next part I provide a synopsis of smallholder irrigation in South Africa at present in terms of extent and structure, and then I move on to point out the livelihood impacts of smallholder irrigation in relation to primary production (farming) and linked economic activity (forward and backward linkages). In the final part I deal with the central concern, namely the potential to expand smallholder irrigation in a dramatic way with a view of creating a substantial number of new livelihoods, and the important factors that constrain this sector from developing to its full potential. To compile this part I drew heavily on my understanding of what is working well and not so well in practice in the past and present, leading me to offer a word of caution that food value chains are highly dynamic systems, implying that historical performance is no guarantee for the future.

What is special about ‘irrigated’ agriculture?
Irrigation is the artificial application of water to cultivated land. It is usually done to reduce or avoid crop water stress. This is critical in areas where the climate causes crop water deficits, i.e. in arid, semi-arid and even in sub-humid regions. Where water deficit is a factor limiting crop production, irrigation enables:
- Crop yields to be raised;

“Globally, irrigation has raised farm income per unit area by factors ranging between 1.1 and 3.”
• Cropping intensity (ratio of cropped area and total area available for cultivation) to be increased by providing the opportunity to grow more than one crop per year on the same land area;
• Crop choice to be broadened, making it possible for farmers to select crops with superior value.

Important implications of irrigation for the farming system and farm enterprise are:
• The biophysical (water stress) risk in crop production is reduced, encouraging investment in other crop growth factors, such as seed, fertilisers, plant protection, and also labour, which all contribute to raising the productivity of land.
• Seasonality (linked to rainfall patterns) is reduced or eliminated, enabling farmers to market at opportune times when prices are high, spread the labour requirement of farming; and spread farm income and cash-flow, when growing a multitude of crops.
• Globally, irrigation has raised farm income per unit area by factors ranging between 1.1 and 3.

It is widely recognised that the combination of irrigation, fertilisers and improved varieties (the green revolution) was a critical factor in the economic development of agrarian societies in Asia (see for example Huang et al., 2006 and Castillo & Namara, 2007), but has also demonstrated its ability to reduce poverty in Africa (see for example Gebregziabher et al., 2009).

Smallholder irrigation in South Africa

In 2008, South Africa had a total of 1 675 822 hectares of registered irrigation land of which 1 399 221 hectares was irrigated annually. Part of this land was farmed by black smallholders; on the basis of the size of their irrigated holding and their control over the supply of irrigation water, these farmers could be categorised into four groups, as shown in Table 1.

Considering that this paper is concerned with the creation of land-based livelihoods, only the categories of independent irrigators and plot holders on smallholder irrigation schemes are of interest. Indications are that the combination of these four groups of smallholders irrigates about 100 000 ha (6–7% of the total). About half of this smallholder irrigation area (47 667 ha) is located on 302 smallholder irrigation schemes. Assuming that there are indeed 100 000 ha being irrigated by smallholders, the remaining 50 000 ha were being farmed by the other three categories of small-scale irrigators. My estimate is that between 10 000 ha and 20 000 ha of the remaining 50 000 ha was located in community gardens,

“...the simpler the operation and maintenance requirements the more likely it is that farmers will keep it going.”
leaving between 30 000 ha and 40 000 ha in the hands of home garden irrigators and independent irrigators, but the share held by farmers in the latter two groups is not known.

**Table 1: Categories of small-scale irrigators found in South Africa based on control over water supply and scale of operation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control over water supply</th>
<th>Size of irrigated land holding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Micro (&lt;0.1 ha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small (&gt;0.1 ha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Home-garden irrigators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent irrigators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective</td>
<td>Holders of allotments on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>irrigated community gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plot-holders on smallholder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>irrigation schemes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A considerable body of work exists on South African smallholder irrigation schemes, which was reviewed recently by Van Averbeke *et al.*, 2011. Key issues emerging from this review were:

- Ninety of the 302 schemes were not operational;
- The likelihood to be operational was 81% for gravity-fed canal schemes, 70% for pumped surface irrigation schemes, 65% for overhead irrigation schemes and 56% for micro irrigation schemes. This indicates that likelihood to be operational was inversely related to the degree of complexity of operating and maintaining schemes. In other words the simpler the operation and maintenance requirements the more likely it is that farmers will keep it going. Another important advantage of gravity-fed canal schemes is the absence of energy costs associated with pumping, thus reducing the variable cost of irrigated farming—but surface irrigation is more labour-intensive than all other systems.
- Generally, the performance of smallholder schemes had been well below expectation, with rather few exceptions. Human (capacity) and social (institutional) problems were at the heart of the below-expected performance.
- Although large schemes (>1000 ha) tend to attract (state) resources more readily than small schemes, probably for political reasons, because large schemes represent large numbers of beneficiaries, generally they tend to perform less well than small schemes (i.e. with a maximum of 100 plot holders).
- Position in relation to markets appeared to be the key factor that determines the balance between production for subsistence and market purposes on smallholder schemes. Position to markets can be a spatial factor (distance to an urban centre and the state of the roads that link the scheme to that centre). Marketing of produce from schemes located close to such centres occurs mostly through street traders and bakkie traders.

“Position in relation to markets appeared to be the key factor that determines the balance between production for subsistence and market purposes on smallholder schemes.”
Position to markets can also be influenced institutionally, when agencies collect produce from farms for processing purposes (sugar cane, tomatoes).

- Plot size was another factor that appeared to affect the degree of commercialisation. Broadly speaking, on schemes with plots smaller than 1 ha production tends to be predominantly subsistence-oriented, and on schemes with plots of 2 ha or larger it tends to be predominantly market-oriented. On schemes with plots ranging between 1 and 2 ha there tends to be a balance between the value of produce that is consumed and the value that is sold. However, it needs pointing out that the diversity in orientation on smallholdings within schemes is probably greater than among schemes.

- Sustainable scheme irrigation is dependent on effective institutions (rule systems) and effective organisations that ensure compliance. These are necessary in the domains of operation and maintenance, irrespective of whether the scheme is pumped or gravity-fed. In the distant past, government was the enforcer, which was paternalistic but tended to be effective. Irrigation management transfer (IMT) allocated this function to farmer collectives, and this has not been entirely successful. Critical issues are enforcement of the payment of electricity or diesel on pumped schemes and maintenance of the water distribution system on all types of schemes.

- The various land tenure systems that apply on smallholder irrigation schemes inhibit the development of vibrant land exchange markets.

As indicated, very little has been documented on the category of independent irrigators that operate in South Africa. Yet they represent a very interesting smallholder irrigation development trajectory, because most of them appear to have established their enterprises using their own resources, and their orientation appears to be predominantly market-oriented.
Smallholder irrigation and rural livelihoods in South Africa

For agriculture to effectively build rural economies, reduce poverty and improve livelihoods, it has to form part of the livelihood strategies of large numbers of people. Agriculture does not only involve primary production but also entails the economic activities that result from backward and forward linkages of agriculture with other sectors as shown in Figure 1.

![Diagram showing backward and forward linkages in agriculture](image)

**Figure 1: Broad economic perspective of the agricultural sector**

Backward linkages in agriculture are the interconnections of primary production with sectors from which it purchases inputs and services, whilst forward linkages refer to the relationships of farming with sectors to which it sells farm produce.

*Livelihoods arising from primary production on smallholder irrigation schemes*

In smallholder irrigation contexts, livelihoods from primary production are derived by farmers and farm workers. A case study that described the livelihoods of plot holders in 2002/03 at the Dzindi canal scheme near Thohoyandou (Mohamed, 2006), where the gross plot size is 1.28 ha (1.5 morgen), showed that the average proportional gross contribution of irrigated cropping to the total household incomes was 30%, but it varied considerably (from 7% to 75%) among households in the various livelihood types that were identified at this scheme, using a typology based on main source of income (Table 2). Important commodities produced at Dzindi include green maize, cabbages and traditional leafy vegetables. Data collected for the period 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013 showed that the best farmers achieved gross incomes of about R45 000 and net incomes of about R30 000 p.a. during that period. However, there were also many who were losing money, primarily because of the cost of full-time labour. Households employing full-time workers usually relied on off-farm activities for their livelihood. Those who depended heavily on farming typically hired labour on a casual basis.
Table 2: Relative contributions of different sources to total income of plot holder homesteads, by livelihood type at Dzindi (2003, n = 97)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of income</th>
<th>Pensioner homesteads</th>
<th>Wage-earner homesteads</th>
<th>Farmer homesteads</th>
<th>Homesteads active in the informal sector (n = 11)</th>
<th>Diversified-income homesteads (n = 9)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One generation (n = 3)</td>
<td>Two generation (n = 16)</td>
<td>Three generation (n = 17)</td>
<td>Skilled (n = 8)</td>
<td>Unskilled (n = 13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remittances</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental child support</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaries and wages</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>78.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old-age pensions</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability grants</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child support grants</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade and services</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture (irrigation)</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Mohamed, 2006

Dzindi was established in 1954, and the current plot holders are mostly second- or even third-generation. Almost invariably, the aspiration of second-generation middle-aged plot holders at Dzindi was for their children to get (well-paying) off-farm jobs. They viewed farm-based livelihoods for their children to be a fall-back option. Evidence from Dzindi indicates that full-time farm workers on smallholder schemes earned little, about R1000 per month in 2013, to which small in-kind benefits were sometimes added.

Livelihoods arising from backward linkages to farming on smallholder irrigation schemes

The provision of land preparation services is the most important livelihood activity that is linked backward to primary production on smallholder irrigation schemes. Typically, these enterprises are owner-operated, and often they are part of the livelihood portfolio of (entrepreneurial) plot holders. Most commonly they use tractors to provide draught power, but there are also some who use animals (cattle or donkeys). Indications are that one tractor enterprise can service about 40 ha of canal irrigation land. The same work would need
about 7 animal draught enterprises. Some salient information on the finance of these land preparation enterprises is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Financial descriptors of three types of land preparation enterprises that operated on smallholder irrigation schemes in Vhembe in 2010**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of draught</th>
<th>Gross revenue (R)</th>
<th>Net income (R)</th>
<th>Present value of all enterprise related capital items (R)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tractors (n=30)</td>
<td>153 068</td>
<td>71 174</td>
<td>52 964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donkeys (n=12)</td>
<td>32 198</td>
<td>25 910</td>
<td>3 481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle (n=2)</td>
<td>26 100</td>
<td>18 364</td>
<td>20 580</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Table compiled from data collected by MS Maake.

Fuel was the main (60–70%) variable cost for tractor enterprises, whilst labour (two people are needed to operate a span) was the main variable cost for animal draught enterprises. The capital cost of animal draught enterprises was also much lower than that of tractor enterprises (Table 3). Whilst these data weigh heavily in favour of animal draught enterprises as a rural development option, it must be stated that irrigation farmers on canal schemes consider the services provided by animal draught enterprises to be inferior. My impression is that many of the quality concerns raised by farmers as regards the services provided by animal draught enterprises could be addressed by investing in animal draught research and development. However, the drudgery associated with ploughing, disking and ridging using animal draught is unavoidable.

**Livelihoods arising from forward linkages to farming on smallholder irrigation schemes**

Trading appears to be the primary livelihood activity that is linked forward to primary production on smallholder irrigation schemes. At Dzindi, which has a peri-urban location, Manyelo (2011) identified four types of fresh produce traders: bakkie traders, central business district (CBD) traders, township pavement traders and door-to-door traders. Bakkie traders made use of small trucks (bakkies) to collect produce from Dzindi (and other sources), to transport this produce to their place of trade and to display this produce to the public for retail purposes. CBD traders were sedentary traders whose place of trade was located within the boundary of the commercial part of Thohoyandou and who did not own motorised transport. To get fresh produce to their place of trade, CBD traders made use of public transport. Township pavement traders were also sedentary traders whose place of trade was located along roadsides in townships and other sites characterised by relatively heavy flows of potential customers, such as the Tshilidzini hospital in Tshifulanani. Door-to-
Door traders were mobile traders who did not own motorised transport. They hawked fresh produce in settlements surrounding Dzindi, moving on foot from house to house, carrying a bag of fresh produce along with them. Table 4 shows the number of street traders who purchased fresh produce from farmers at Dzindi by category, and Table 5 shows the sources of income of their homesteads.

Table 4: Number of street traders who purchased fresh produce from farmers at Dzindi by category, June 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Street trader category</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bakkie traders</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBD* traders</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Township pavement traders</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door-to-door traders</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>86</strong></td>
<td><strong>101</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CBD* = central business district

Source: Manyelo, 2011

Of considerable interest from a livelihood perspective was that the number of street traders (101) purchasing fresh produce at Dzindi was almost equal to the number of farm enterprises at Dzindi (104). With the exception of the bakkie traders, these street trader enterprises were ‘survivalist’ in terms of the incomes they provided.

The prevalence of CBD traders arose from the proximity of Dzindi to Thohoyandou, which limited the daily cost of transporting fresh produce from the scheme to town. These types of traders are less likely to be operating on schemes that are farther away from town, because of rising transportation costs which reduce net income.

Besides marketing produce to street traders, entrepreneurial smallholder irrigators enter into arrangements with supermarkets and with enterprises that hold food preparation tenders with schools or hospitals. Among smallholders the belief prevails that supplying supermarkets, or even better, supplying national fresh produce markets is the ultimate achievement. However, the reality is that the more sophisticated and distant the market, the higher the transaction costs and the lower the returns per unit produce.

“...the reality is that the more sophisticated and distant the market, the higher the transaction costs and the lower the returns per unit produce.”

Street trader selling Chinese cabbage in Thohoyandou
Table 5: Average total monthly cash income of trader homesteads, using net income from trading for the period June 2008–May 2009, by trader category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trader type</th>
<th>Salaries and wages</th>
<th>Remittances</th>
<th>Welfare grants</th>
<th>Trading</th>
<th>Agriculture</th>
<th>Total (R month⁻¹)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bakkie (n=4)</td>
<td>2 500</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>7 914</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10 724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBD (n=4)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1 813</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>2 480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door-to-door (n=4)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>1 808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Township pavement (n=4)</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>1 032</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 570</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Manyelo, 2011

Concluding remarks

The National Development Plan: Vision 2030 proposes the smallholder irrigation development trajectory to stimulate economic activity in the rural areas of South Africa. The target of developing 0.5 million ha in this way is daunting to say the least, because it would require a five-fold increase of the total smallholder area in South Africa, and a ten-fold increase if only smallholder irrigation schemes are considered. The task appears even more overwhelming when one considers that in many instances sustainable solutions for the gross under-performance of smallholder irrigation schemes have remained elusive. On the other hand, there is also evidence, as I have provided in this paper, that the livelihood impact of smallholder irrigation can be considerable. I have pointed out that peri-urban locations encourage commercialisation of smallholder irrigation, because these locations assist in the marketing of fresh produce, which tends to have a higher value than semi-perishables such as potatoes, onions and sweet potatoes, and non-perishables such as grains. Identifying opportunities that represent suitable land-water-farmers-market combinations should, therefore, be encouraged by local governments as part of their local economic development strategies. Establishing smallholder irrigation in remote rural areas has to place marketing at the centre of planning. It is quite feasible to organise the marketing of grains, because these can be stored on farms and tend to have a low bulk, but income derived from irrigated grain production tends to be lower than that derived from fresh produce (about one-third of the

“Identifying opportunities that represent suitable land-water-farmers-market combinations should, therefore, be encouraged by local governments as part of their local economic development strategies.”
“Establishing smallholder irrigation in remote rural areas has to place marketing at the centre of planning.”

value), which has implications for the size of smallholdings. Tree crops are another option, but they take time to grow, typically at least five years before generating the first income, and double that time to reach break-even and the first profits. Moreover, income from the farm is a once-per-year occasion, raising the need for bridging finance. Income derived from the production of fruit and nuts is highly dependent on the quality of the produce, with export quality being most profitable, but this requires skilful farming. Finally, whilst smallholder irrigation formed part of the successful transition of Asian countries from agrarian to industrialised and in some cases knowledge economies, it must be remembered that South Africa has gone a long way along the path of de-agrarianisation. By implication, full-scale implementation of the smallholder irrigation development trajectory proposed in the National Development Plan would require a process of re-agrarianisation, involving the youth. My experience is that only a (small) minority of young (black) people in South Africa show an interest in land-based smallholder livelihoods.

Acknowledgements
The work presented in this paper is largely based on research findings generated by WRC Project K5/1804 (WRC, 2009:53) and WRC Project K5/2179 (WRC, 2013:88), which were both funded by the Water Research Commission.

References
POST-PRESENTATION DISCUSSION

Discussion after Wim Van Averbeke’s presentation highlighted issues that needed further exploration in the sessions to come. Points made included the following:

- The constraints and opportunities referred to in the paper indicate how policy and intervention opportunities can be identified. Key constraints include: capacity deficiencies relating to knowledge and skills; institutional deficiencies; a lack of the specialised training in irrigation schemes needed. How can these deficiencies be remedied, in terms of improved support for farmers and strengthened institutions?
  - Key opportunities include: government investment in gravity-fed canal schemes, instead of in the kinds of expensive and difficult technologies that they currently invest in, and which keep breaking down; proximity to urban areas – a key factor that should be taken into account with new schemes; the link between plot size and commercialisation – government bureaucrats need to think about how to create a range of plot sizes for different small-scale farming needs, based on a better understanding of the diverse types of small-scale farming that go on.
  - The fundamental question that government needs to address is how it should invest in institutions to overcome these constraints and make good use of the available opportunities.

- Reflecting on the issue raised of land being reallocated to people through land reform, participants agreed that land tenure is one of the greatest challenges needing to be dealt with. It may be correct to talk about shifting from state-owned to privately owned land within irrigation schemes, but there is the problem of outsiders buying up the land once this happens. Policy makers need to think carefully about how the transition happens – for example, are foreigners allowed to own land? do local people own the land privately? The point was forcefully made that these are the make-or-break questions for small-scale farming, because the social fabric is often what holds this type of farming together as much as markets and money. In Tugela Ferry, for example, there is a customary land tenure system, and the local land market is a very informal one, without land title involved, because if a plot of land is not used, it is quickly reallocated. There is thus a
strong incentive to use the land. The plot sizes are small (0.11 hectares) but several can be held by one family, and this creates more flexibility than if everyone gets a 2 hectare plot and some people can’t use it all. Schemes need to be designed that facilitate both tenure security and an active market.

- With regard to irrigation schemes, Wim van Averbeker was asked why he had not focused more on using drip irrigation on a wider scale in households across the country, as the types of irrigation described in his presentation are a luxury that isn’t available to most communities. His response was that for certain crops micro-irrigation is the most efficient option, but it is also the most demanding in terms of expertise. The idea is to create systems that people can run themselves, independently. In his view it would be better to first start people off with easier systems like canal irrigation, and then introduce more sophisticated systems like drip as they become confident with the simpler system — that is, to design irrigation schemes so that there can be a transition from one technology to another.

- A key issue touched on in the discussion, that would be returned to throughout the action-dialogue was how to develop a farming policy that could ‘entice the youth’ into farming, given that many communities see farming as only a ‘fallback option’ for the youth, if they can’t find better employment.
Agricultural development in communal areas and in land reform contexts in South Africa

Michael Aliber

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Introduction – concerns regarding the ‘constraint focus’

Yes, small-scale farmers face constraints. However, there are various problems with focusing on these as a point of departure for a discussion of which the general theme is ‘what should be done’.

First, these constraints tend to be ‘over-determined’. When I’ve had this or similar discussions with smallholders in the past, or when I’ve looked at research on ‘what farmers need’, the tendency is that the constraints are all-encompassing – lack of markets, lack of credit, lack of tractors, lack of agro-processing capacity, lack of irrigation! Yes, one can encourage smallholders to rank their constraints in order of severity, or otherwise determine some idea of priorities, but does this bring one closer to understanding what is to be done? I believe not: one reason is that small-scale farmers are often so deeply disempowered that they have little basis on which to assess – or at least express – their most fundamental constraints. Moreover, it is not obvious that officials’ and experts’ determinations of what the main constraints are, are much more meaningful. At one level, it is easy to agree more or less on a list, but beyond that, where to?

A second, closely related problem, is that discussions on constraints are often indistinguishable from the discussion of what smallholders need from government in order to address all the ‘lacks’ alluded to above. Should smallholders expect more from government? Probably yes, but is this the right frame of mind in which to determine what government’s priorities should be? Is this an effective mode of operation for government? What makes me think otherwise is that this is more or less what is presently happening – if we look for example at how CASP (the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme) is spent (or was spent prior to Fetsa Tlala), or Ilima Letsema (as far as I can make out what Ilima Letsema actually does), it is about trying to do and buy things for farmers, and other

“... the constraints focus ... distracts us from where the constraints are actually the most problematic, which is with how government does things, or doesn’t do things. ...”
rural dwellers, and to a large extent, it is ‘going nowhere expensively’.6

My third concern regarding the constraints focus is that it distracts us from where the constraints are actually the most problematic, which is with how government does things, or doesn’t do things. . .

The key challenges and dilemmas facing government policy makers

Am I just saying we should focus more on ‘opportunities’, as other critics of the constraint-focus have sometimes suggested? Not necessarily: focusing on opportunities – especially when the process is government-led – has a tendency to take us back to paprika, or whatever the wonder crop/activity is at the moment.7 At the risk of sounding like a market fundamentalist, I tend to agree with Easterly (2006) in his critique of foreign aid, for example when he wrote, “The rich have markets, and the poor have bureaucrats”, or “planners cannot bring prosperity”. Of course, in planning, we are often planning for the sake of improving market access; but in my experience this above all we do poorly.

But then, is this to say that there should be no planning, or that government in particular should not use planning as a means of promoting agricultural development? That would seem absurd, so presumably there are some important distinctions to be drawn. I think this question of government planning is one of the two central dilemmas right now, and probably has been for a long time.

Let me illustrate with a recent example. In 2010, the North West provincial department of agriculture launched the Agricultural Master Plan (AMP), which was a multi-million rand, multi-year project involving the Agricultural Research Council, the University of the Free State, the Development Bank of Southern Africa, etc. The AMP is a ‘decision support tool’ consisting

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6 These are government programmes schemes aimed at bringing under-cultivated land in communal areas and on land reform farms into production, supporting smallholder and subsistence farmers and addressing food insecurity. A goal of putting one million hectares under crops by the year 2019 has been announced. However, these programmes usually involve hiring contractors to cultivate crops instead of supporting farmers to do so themselves, and thus do not address the underlying reasons for declining levels of cultivation.

7 This is a reference to the Northern Cape’s famous R45 million paprika project, involving primary production and processing.

of hundreds of enterprise budgets and capability maps covering the province and its district municipalities. The declared objectives of the AMP are: “alleviating pressure on always earning a wage to purchase food; encouraging producers to understand the link between food production and the land; and developing and nurturing a culture of self-reliance, which is implied in the notion of an African Renaissance”. On the face of it, this seems great, but how is the AMP meant to be used in such a way as to lead to these worthy outcomes?

That is not the least bit clear. One indication in the AMP documentation is that this will happen via projects: “The document includes project identification for each of the sectors, i.e. Social Development, Economic Development, Environment and Natural Resource Management, Development Administration and Infrastructure Development”. Where these “projects” are in the AMP is difficult to discern, unless this is a reference to the AMP’s spreadsheet lists of some 400 projects, most of which would appear to be conventional projects funded by CASP, Ilima Letsema, and LandCare. Presumably the underlying conviction is that, projects or no, the information resources made available through the AMP will enable government, private sector, and individuals to make better decisions, meaning greater economic efficiency, and thus the desired outcomes mentioned above, not least because training in the use of the AMP system will then “improve agricultural productivity, ensure sustainability, reduce food costs, and improve quality and availability of food”. It is thus all the more strange that the key analytical document accompanying the AMP concludes as follows:

Within the background of the structure of the NWP [North West Province] economy and its wide production capabilities, there is no doubt that agriculture will remain a key role player in terms of food production and job creation. However, the effectiveness with which the sector plays that role will depend to a large extent on how well some of the current constraints facing the sector are addressed. The constraints identified are institutional weaknesses and poor infrastructure. These especially relate to the deprived condition of many secondary roads linking farms to markets and sources of needed farm inputs.

The point is not that the AMP was a poorly managed process in which contradictory objectives and understandings came to the surface. The point is that there is an ambiguity about planning that often betrays itself: Is our underlying problem merely that we don’t have enough of the right information, for want of which we don’t plan well? . . . Or are our problems more to do with other things entirely, such as basic institutional capacity and road infrastructure, for which better planning in the agricultural sector is no substitute?”
plan in their own right, or are they following a recipe in the hope that the cake comes out just as it looks on the cover photo? Is it often the case, as it appears to be with the AMP, that planning has a tendency to be conservative rather than transformative, because it relies so heavily on the ‘expert knowledge’ of how and where crops should be grown and livestock reared? Or, as at least some of the authors of the AMP eventually concluded, are our problems more to do with other things entirely, such as basic institutional capacity and road infrastructure, for which better planning in the agricultural sector is no substitute?

I have argued elsewhere that the history of white commercial farming in South Africa is open to different interpretations. The dominant interpretation is that the state deserves credit for the fact that we have a strong, successful commercial farming sector; the state made this happen through good planning and programmes, and especially thanks to subsidies and state-led capital infrastructure investments. The interpretation that I favour is that government’s agriculture-specific contribution is less significant than usually supposed, which is not to say irrelevant. Far more important than any specific development or support interventions was the massive appropriation of land for the benefit of white farmers, and then the long process of attrition through which the once 117 000 farms have dwindled to around 35 000, despite massive subsidies that in most instances were meant to keep farmers in business. This is more or less the same process observable in North America or Western Europe. As with these latter, to the extent that state-supported R&D contributed to the emergence of modern farming methods in South Africa, it led not so much to the strength of the sector as to its penchant for self-destruction through chronic over-production. Insofar as our planning tends to be based on the expert knowledge associated with large-scale commercial farming, it tends to extend or replicate the fundamentally problematic nature of the prevailing agro-food system.

These observations do not translate in a straightforward manner into lessons for the former homeland areas, but they do give some idea as to what will not work (i.e. master plans, however understood), and some hints as to what might (see below).

In addition to this deep level of uncertainty as to what can be accomplished with planning, the other main dilemma faced by government, I think, is its mode of interaction with farmers. To put it simply, government has tended to sacrifice core functions and systems in

“Insofar as our planning tends to be based on the expert knowledge associated with large-scale commercial farming, it tends to extend or replicate the fundamentally problematic nature of the prevailing agro-food system.”

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8 See e.g. Mulaudzi (2000) for a vivid account of government’s impotence in supporting white commercial farmers in early 20th century Northern Transvaal.
favour of projects. What do I mean by ‘projects’? This is perhaps part of the problem – the word has become quite elastic. Gittinger begins his classic handbook *The Economic Analysis of Agricultural Projects* (1984) by asserting that “[projects] are the ‘cutting edge’ of development.” Whether or not this heady characterisation was ever warranted, it is important to note that what Gittinger had in mind is something closer to what we mean when we speak of schemes or programmes, for example irrigation investments, the construction of processing plants, and land settlement interventions. The economic rationale for these is that they have the potential to uplift numbers of individual farmers in an area, in effect by altering the production environment.

For reasons that are difficult to understand, a ‘project’ in the South African agricultural development context more often refers to an intervention on behalf of a single farming ‘enterprise’, whether that ‘enterprise’ is individual-based or group-based. This is why, for example, it is perfectly normal for the North West agriculture department to have hundreds of projects on its books at any point in time. But I put ‘enterprise’ in inverted commas, because in reality projects often don’t have the look and feel of real enterprises; they may aspire to get people started in an enterprise, but by virtue of being project-based – often from inception – they typically fail to become even remotely entrepreneurial, which is why they so frequently flop.

Why else is the project focus – or what we might call ‘projectism’ – so problematic? One reason is that, as mentioned, this is done at the expense of core functions, not least extension. Extension officers are increasingly saddled with ‘project management’ (e.g. for CASP, Ilima-Letsema and LandCare), leaving less time for actual extension, which might explain how it is that in 2013, the average extension officer only managed to interact with 18 different smallholder or subsistence households. Perhaps as importantly (though here I’m

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9 In language that is very much in tune with the spirit of the APM, Gittinger goes on to say, “Sound planning rests on the availability of a wide range of information about existing and potential investments and their likely effects on growth and other national objectives. It is project analysis that provides this information, and those projects selected for implementation then become the vehicle for using resources to create new income. Realistic planning involves knowing the amount that can be spent on development activities each year and the resources that will be required for particular kinds of investment.”

10 For a superb illustration of this, see Van Averbeke and Ralivhesa’s (2011) survey of small-scale broiler production units in the Thohoyandou area, which in effect contrasts individual-based enterprises with group-based projects.

“I would argue that the energy devoted to the whole project-planning-and-management cycle has absorbed too much time and energy at management level that could rather be dedicated to improving South Africa’s woefully inadequate extension services and other routine support functions.”
speculating), this tendency to turn extension officers into project managers may have the effect of reshaping rural people’s perceptions of extension officers as being conduits of government largesse. More broadly, I would argue that the energy devoted to the whole project-planning-and-management cycle has absorbed too much time and energy at management level that could rather be dedicated to improving South Africa’s woefully inadequate extension services and other routine support functions. The other reason it is problematic is that it does not seem to work; a very tiny fraction of households get assistance, and of those that do, there is little evidence to suggest that they benefit significantly or sustainably.

I believe that what projectism illustrates is a well-intentioned effort to concentrate enough support on selected rural households so that they succeed, and in that sense it is laudable. Somehow, however, the overall effect is to stymie individual initiative and enterprise rather than stimulate it. The more extreme version of this tendency is in programmes such as the Massive Food Programme and, more recently, Fetsa Tlala, where government uses contractors to farm on people’s behalf, in principle because rural people are too poor to do anything for themselves, but in reality in such a manner as to ignore and disrespect what is there, unimpressive though it may be by commercial standards.

‘Models’
There is a sense that perhaps what we need is ‘models’, which as I understand it are ways of organising economic activity so that products are produced and then reach the market; a model is a way of ‘getting things going’. Models are typically commodity-specific, and often involve partnerships between existing commercial entities and ‘communities’. Perhaps the biggest virtue of models is that they are replicable, which is why we refer to them as ‘models’ in the first place. But do models replicate? Maybe some do, however many are dependent on the initiative and goodwill of the existing commercial entity, or some kind of charismatic driver, and it would seem that there are only so many of these. More to the point, many models are not far away from projects in the sense discussed above, in fact they are merely new models for how to elaborate projects.

Still, there are other kinds of models we could consider that are less about specific production systems, and more about conceptual strategies or current realities. I can think of three compelling ones that, while not the least bit new, deserve more attention, especially as a means of promoting agricultural development in the former homelands.

“... many models are dependent on the initiative and goodwill of the existing commercial entity, or some kind of charismatic driver, and it would seem that there are only so many of these.”
The ‘build on what’s there model’

There is an economy in former homeland areas, and while it may not be as vibrant as one would like, there are possibly advantages to designing or promoting initiatives with these realities in mind. For example, to the extent that small-scale farmers access tractor services, they hire these services from the few neighbours in their midst who own tractors. This is a system that exists and works, albeit at too low a level for anyone’s satisfaction. But rather than strengthening that which exists, government tends to want to introduce its own tractor services, or use contractors, which typically has the effect of under-cutting the existing tractor services – at least until the government service collapses, which it usually does. Why do we not have any initiatives seeking to find out how to strengthen the existing approach? Why can’t we do so in such a way as to introduce conservation agriculture, etc. etc.? The only reason I can think of is because we have a strong bias against what is there already.

A second example: consider that for their food purchases, the poorest households in former homelands rely as much on informal retail channels and independent shops as on chain stores, and they spend less money per capita on food in doing so.11 There is also evidence that these retailers depend at least to some extent on local production. Thus these retail channels contribute to a ‘local food economy’, however weak, in a manner that emerging rural supermarkets generally do not. While it’s fine to search for ways of linking smallholders in former homelands to formal markets, which are generally ‘outside’ of these areas, why not seek to strengthen the local food economies that already exist?12 The market is there, it is reasonably large, and at present a large share of this market is satisfied by food carted in from outside.

And a third example relates to land redistribution. Why is it that, notwithstanding the pro-smallholder ethos of the RDP, land redistribution has contributed so insignificantly to the creation of new opportunities for smallholders? The answer is not because subdivision is regulated by legislation (the enabling legislation for redistribution provides for an automatic exemption to the Subdivision of Agricultural Land Act), but because the Department of Land

11 Aliber and Mdoda, The direct and indirect economic contribution of small-scale black agriculture in South Africa. Unpublished article.
12 To be fair, this is precisely the Department of Trade and Industry’s rationale for supporting small-scale maize milling ventures; unfortunately, the Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries is doing little or nothing to support or work with this initiative.
Affairs/Department of Rural Development and Land Reform is not interested in subdividing. While it may be true that the smallholder sector in the former homelands is not as vibrant as we would prefer, it nonetheless serves as a model that land redistribution could draw upon (and strengthen), and yet this is precisely what is not happening.

The ‘survival (and expansion) of the fittest model’

If today’s large-scale commercial farming sector is largely the product of a long process of change and attrition, perhaps the same logic has to be appreciated in respect of agriculture in the former homelands. To some extent this is already happening, but it is happening in a lopsided manner. From the General Household Survey, we know that 7% of the households in former homeland areas own 75% of the large livestock equivalents, which I would think is excessive and unfortunate. For crop production, however, there is little evidence of a similar trend, and this is also unfortunate. I tend to agree with Thomson’s and others’ analyses of the rigidity of tenure systems, in particular through not accommodating rental arrangements more readily (see Thomson and Lyne 1993). However, one must also be aware of the danger of embracing this ‘model’ thoughtlessly; it should not be embraced at the expense of (government) support to subsistence producers, partly because subsistence production is important in its own right, and partly because it may well be that, given some mobility, it is a share of today’s subsistence producers who will one day become smallholders or larger-scale commercial farmers.

The relevance of this model for land redistribution is that it puts a different perspective on failure. At present, government likes to believe that it can choose redistribution beneficiaries carefully enough, and support them well enough, that failure can be minimised. Perhaps this is true, but is it worth it? In any event, minimising failure is very different from preventing it. The white farmer settlement schemes of the past probably had a better approach: give lots of people opportunities and support them fairly, but when they fail, give others a chance or allow those more successful to expand. When the Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy (PLAS) was launched some years ago, it would have seemed that this basic approach might have been the underlying idea, but that is certainly not how PLAS is being used now.

The ‘deliberate learning model’

We all have ideas about what ‘should be done’, and by and large our ideas differ. This is another way of saying that, as a collective, we don’t know. That is quite an amazing fact, but there is no escaping it. “We all have ideas about what ‘should be done’, and by and large our ideas differ. This is another way of saying that, as a collective, we don’t know. That is quite an amazing fact, but there is no escaping it.”
The gist of the problem is that we would rather decide than learn. Learning means trying and failing, but in a self-conscious, deliberate manner, so that we can draw lessons in support of our future efforts. Notwithstanding some lip-service paid to monitoring and evaluation, we are not driven by M&E. An honest way of characterising the current government-wide Outcomes Approach is that government sets ambitious targets for itself, but then fudges the numbers to suit itself when it struggles to meet those targets, in fact it does not even have a proper apparatus or method for assessing progress, despite some noble attempts at the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation.

What if instead we accepted that we don’t know the answers, and embark on a gamut of pilots and experiments, the results of which we engage with collectively and honestly?

Conclusions

The gist of this convoluted submission is that, despite many great ideas and real-life examples, in general terms we are not on the right road, and selecting a few cases from ‘best practice’ is unlikely to help. The endless fascination with planning frameworks and decision support tools and war rooms and so forth suggests a thirst for certainty which, unfortunately, keeps eluding us. Superimposed on this picture of confusion, there is a lack of clarity as to what we are trying to achieve, in particular by imagining that our collective job is to remould small-scale agriculture to fit our (misguided) picture of large-scale commercial agriculture.

The only ‘solution’ I can envisage is to be more open to experimentation and learning, and to continuously question our assumptions about what we’re trying to achieve.

References


“... there is a lack of clarity as to what we are trying to achieve, in particular by imagining that our collective job is to remould small-scale agriculture to fit our (misguided) picture of large-scale commercial agriculture.”
Tozamile Lukhalo: I share the frustration evident in the presentation, it confirms what I’ve said about projects, where extension officers are expected to manage projects and run them on behalf of farmers and they aren’t trained to do this - they must take decisions on behalf of the farmers and then when the projects fail they are blamed.

Lyle Kew: The livestock industry needs to metamorphose, we need to get rid of non-productive livestock, improve actual breeding stock, good animal husbandry and so on. The fact is that communal areas are net importers of slaughter animals, so there’s a continuing need for quality slaughter animals even though we’re running animals that are just ruining the environment. Government, as a policy issue, needs to deal with carrying capacity, the number of animals ownable in a livestock area.

Mastoera Sadan: It says something about government’s approach to policy making and programme design: we are not the best people to be running projects for people – we struggle with the notion of agency, of letting people choose for themselves. It’s a very paternalistic approach.

Ben Cousins: And it doesn’t work.

Francis Wilson: In that paternalistic policy, there’s also a question of power – the officials want to control allocation of funds in projects.

Rauri Alcock: On the other hand, no one has the answers to these questions about cattle, farms, etc. – the NGOs don’t have the answers to the things government isn’t doing well.

BC: That’s a welcome point – we don’t have all the answers, but we do have relevant experience. Maybe it’s about changing the way we all work. To pick up on Michael’s model of building on what’s there – e.g. why are we redistributing land when people aren’t using the land they already have, the millions of hectares of arable land? There are answers to this question. One of government’s answers is to bring in large-scale contractors in schemes such as the Massive Food Production Programme. But bringing in large-scale contractors doesn’t work. A project like the Siyazondle Homestead Gardening Project works because it built on what they were already doing. But funding for that has now declined ... government had a success and they let it go. Now the land placed under the ‘Massive’ schemes is back under livestock. People still feel strongly that it’s their land, but they’re using it in a different way. We should accept this, accept how people want to use their land and build on the productivity of this, when we can’t change the underlying conditions.
What is a ‘smallholder farmer’ in South Africa today?

Ben Cousins
Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS), UWC

What is a smallholder farmer? The term is widely used but has no single, agreed meaning. It is often used to refer to farmers who are distinct from ‘subsistence’ farmers, on the one hand, and from ‘commercial farmers’, on the other. But smallholder producers are themselves diverse, or socially differentiated, and display a wide variety of production objectives, farming scales, farming systems and kinds of market orientation.

We need to take this diversity into account in designing policies and programmes for the support of black small-scale farmers, whether they be located on farms transferred through land reform, in communal areas, or on private land. ‘One size’ does NOT fit all. Determining the social, economic and technical features of the target population, before deciding on what support to give them, and how, is vital.

Farm size is relative to context

The terms ‘large’, ‘medium’ and ‘small’ are often taken to refer to farm size, i.e. to the area in hectares used by a farming unit. These are clearly relative terms, and their meaning varies a great deal depending on context. Size varies by:

a) agro-ecology (farms in drier zones tend to be larger than those in wetter zones);
b) product (strawberry farms tend to be smaller than citrus farms);
c) technology (farms that use tractors tend to be larger than farms that use ox-drawn ploughs or hoes);
d) labour regime (farms that hire in labour tend to be larger than those that use family labour only);
e) farming system (farms with irrigation tend to be smaller than farms relying only on rainfall).

Farm size, or scale of farming?

There is an important distinction, however, between farm size and scale of farming. Farm size refers to the land area, usually measured in hectares, of the productive unit. Farm scale refers to the relative scale of the farming operation or enterprise (which can be large-scale on a small area of land, as in intensive horticulture and livestock production, or small-scale on a large area, as in extensive livestock in an arid zone). Its key determinant is

“. . . smallholder producers are themselves diverse, or socially differentiated . . . We need to take this diversity into account in designing policies and programmes for the support of black small-scale farmers.”
“The key determinant of farm scale is the capital intensity of the enterprise, i.e. the degree to which labour is substituted by capital.”

The capital intensity of the enterprise, i.e. the degree to which labour is substituted by capital.

Agricultural economists debate with each other over whether or not there are economies of scale in agriculture (reducing the average cost of a product by increasing the scale of production), as well as economies of scope (reducing the average costs of an enterprise by producing two or more products). In one view, small farms tend to be more productive and more efficient than large farms because they are more labour-intensive and thus use land more efficiently, the so-called ‘inverse relationship between farm size and productivity’. Others disagree, and assert that mechanization and the use of chemical inputs results in higher levels of productivity of both labour and land, as well as capital.

**Key variables for defining smallholder farmers**

In the past small-scale farmers were often called ‘peasants’, who farmed with family labour and aimed to feed themselves. But in the modern world everyone needs some cash to survive. Small-scale farmers who use mainly family labour, simple technologies and eat a proportion of their produce, but who have to earn cash either from the sale of farm products or of their own labour, are now often termed ‘smallholders’.

To distinguish smallholders from commercial farmers, and also to understand the differences between types of smallholder, a number of variables are relevant:

1. the objective of farming
2. the proportion of output that is marketed
3. the contribution of farming to household income
4. the use of family labour or hired labour
5. the degree of mechanization
6. the capital intensity
7. the access to finances.

These variables can be used to develop typologies of key differences amongst smallholders. One typology distinguishes between subsistence farmers, small investor farmers, and large-scale commercial farmers – this is shown as Typology A below. This is useful for some purposes, but does not identify differences amongst market-oriented small-scale farmers, e.g. in relation to the kinds of markets they supply. This limits its usefulness for policy and programme design.
Typology A: A typology of farmers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Subsistence (family) farmers</th>
<th>Small investor farmers</th>
<th>Large-scale farmers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective of production</strong></td>
<td>Food security</td>
<td>Farming for both subsistence and cash income</td>
<td>Profit – production is high-value and export-oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Labour</strong></td>
<td>Family labour</td>
<td>Family plus hired labour</td>
<td>Hired labour, often to operate machinery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scale</strong></td>
<td>Very small plots (often &lt; 1 ha)</td>
<td>Small farms</td>
<td>Medium to large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access to finance</strong></td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>Constrained</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poverty status</strong></td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Less poor</td>
<td>Wealthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Market/asset status</strong></td>
<td>Asset-constrained, context often unfavourable</td>
<td>Market-oriented and asset-constrained</td>
<td>Market-driven</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


I suggest that a more useful typology distinguishes small-scale farmers who supply mainly loose value chains, in which most sales are ‘spot’ transactions, from those who supply mainly tight value chains, that are governed by relatively onerous contracts and/or standards.

Typology B sets out the key features of four different kinds of black small-scale farmers found in South African today, and suggests some estimated numbers of each type.

A word of warning: typologies can be misleading if they are read as iron-clad categories into which we try to squeeze the complexity of the real world . . . some smallholder farmers in South Africa today supply both loose and tight value chains, and the proportions in which they do so can vary over time. Typologies are useful if they enable us to identify general patterns and tendencies, and the underlying forces and processes that explain them. But we must be circumspect in their use.

“...typologies can be misleading if they are read as iron-clad categories into which we try to squeeze the complexity of the real world . . . some smallholder farmers in South Africa today supply both loose and tight value chains, and the proportions in which they do so can vary over time.”
Typology B: Smallholders in South Africa today

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective of production</th>
<th>Subsistence-oriented smallholders</th>
<th>Market-oriented smallholders in loose value chains</th>
<th>Market-oriented smallholders in tight value chains</th>
<th>Small-scale black capitalist farmers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Household consumption of additional food</td>
<td>Household consumption + cash income</td>
<td>Cash income + some home consumption</td>
<td>Profit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of marketed output</td>
<td>None or insignificant</td>
<td>50% or &gt;</td>
<td>75% or &gt;</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution to household income</td>
<td>Reduces expenditure on food</td>
<td>Variable – from small to significant</td>
<td>Significant</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Family + some hired</td>
<td>Family + significant numbers hired</td>
<td>Hired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanisation</td>
<td>Very low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium to high</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital intensity</td>
<td>Very low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium to high</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to finance</td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Significant</td>
<td>Very significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers in SA (households)</td>
<td>2–2.5 million</td>
<td>200–250 000</td>
<td>5–10 000?</td>
<td>5–10 000?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Cousins and Chikazunga, 2013

A definition of smallholder farming

Smallholders are small-scale farmers who use farm produce for home consumption to a significant degree, and use family labour within the farming operation to a significant degree. This separates them from small-scale capitalist farmers, for whom home consumption and family labour are negligible, and for whom profit is by far the most important objective of their farming enterprise.

For different types of smallholders, farming contributes a highly variable amount of cash income via marketing of farm produce. Key differences exist in relation to marketing within
loose value chains and tight value chains. Levels of *mechanization, capital intensity and access to finance* are also highly variable amongst smallholder farmers.

**Challenges for policy makers and practitioners**

The following are some challenges for both policy makers and practitioners that follow from the approach to understanding differences amongst smallholder farmers discussed above:

a) It is critically important to *distinguish between the different needs and requirements of various types of smallholder farmers*, and not attempt to meet all those needs through the same policies and programmes. Differentiated policies and programmes must be well fitted to the diverse farming systems practised by a differentiated population.

b) At the same time, it is important to *create flexibility in policies and programmes* and not to box farmers into silos; rather, policies should allow routes for successful producers to increase the scale and intensity of their farming systems when they are able to do so.  

c) Smallholders who are mainly engaged in producing extra food for domestic consumption, usually in homestead gardens or from small herds and flocks of livestock, are in the majority in South Africa today. Their greatest need is for effective support in the form of fencing, water supplies, some simple inputs and veterinary support for their livestock, plus appropriate technical advice. The outcome will be mainly enhanced food security, not a great deal of extra production for markets. *The challenge is to provide support services to subsistence-oriented smallholders on a large scale, in a variety of contexts* that includes communal areas, farm workers on their own plots on commercial farms, and informal settlements in urban and peri-urban areas.

d) Market-oriented smallholders in loose value chains rely heavily on family labour, and usually sell their fresh produce to bakkie traders or hawkers, or sell surplus livestock to neighbours or others nearby. They also need assistance with fencing, water supplies, inputs and veterinary support for their livestock, but appropriate advice for them includes detailed information on pests and diseases and how to use expensive inputs such as crop chemicals and livestock remedies. *One key challenge is to understand*

> “...policies should allow routes for successful producers to increase the scale and intensity of their farming systems when they are able to do so...”

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13 This is not the same idea as ‘graduation’, which assumes that there is a predefined and linear transition from ‘subsistence’ to commercial’ farming, and is often accompanied by attitudes of derision towards subsistence-oriented systems of production.
these loose value chains and markets and to support both producers and market intermediaries, in their efforts to overcome the constraints that flow from low levels of capitalization, and in maximizing the opportunities that these value chains offer. Collective action (e.g. co-operative marketing) is worth exploring.

e) Market-oriented smallholders in tight value chains have very different needs, mostly focused on meeting the demanding requirements of the markets they supply, in relation to both quantity and quality. They must be adequately capitalized and mechanaised, but not placed under an unmanageable burden of debt. Technical support must be sophisticated and able to help farmers identify and resolve problems in relation to both technical and farm management issues. Record-keeping is essential. Mentoring by large-scale commercial farmers and commodity associations may be feasible.

References


**Rauri Alcock:** We need to ask policy makers: which group of farmers in the typology do you choose to spend our taxes on, and why? The state needs to say ‘these are our primary clients, and for this reason’ not just because they’re black, but because they’re poor... and if they want to support the tenderpreneurs with our taxes, they need to argue why this is a good idea.

**Francis Wilson:** Infrastructure is economical at a different scale from smallholder farming itself – scale at different levels of function needs to be looked at, in terms of irrigation, marketing etc. And then, on another point: the smallholders themselves are not necessarily getting their money from these activities – or are they?

**Ben Cousins:** The most important source of income for the two million smallest-scale smallholders is state grants; for the other two kinds of smallholder we need to do more research to find out.

**FW:** What is the argument for supporting them as smallholders?

**RA:** Are we saying that because they get grants we’re not going to support them with agriculture – or because they get grants, we want them to top up with agriculture?

**BC:** The problem that many smallholders face is that they are many and small and uncoordinated, particularly when it comes to accessing inputs such as marketing, water etc. How can we create economies of scale through creating institutions that bring them together, reduce their costs, increase their efficiency. The co-operatives policy is not effective at the moment. Are there ways to support institutional development that is not driven from the top, but builds on initiatives from below? These are huge challenges.

**Anold Derembwe:** A question for Ben – what did you learn in Zimbabwe about labour-intensive irrigation and water extension services, in relation to South Africa’s greater emphasis on capital-intensive services, as mentioned by Michael Aliber?

**BC:** In 1980 smallholder farmers in Zimbabwe were supplying 12% of marketed maize; five years later they were supplying 65–70%. They did that as a result of improved extension services, and providing access to markets, changing the policy environment, ‘freeing up’ the communal areas so that farmers could produce for the market. It wasn’t about government coming in and spending millions on tractors which sit outside government offices, or dumping inputs on people which they hadn’t asked for — it was about working with farmers. This is the implication of what Michael is saying. At the same time some capital investment is important where appropriate, e.g. to fix existing irrigation schemes.
PART II – PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

The brief from the organisers of the action-dialogue to practitioners was to give presentations in which they addressed 13 questions circulated to them prior to the event. These questions were all informed by the central objective of the action-dialogue, namely:

- to identify emerging opportunities for and key constraints on small-scale agriculture in South Africa, drawing on the experiences of practitioners located primarily in non-governmental organisations and the private sector, and to identify the main lessons for national and provincial policy-making on agriculture.

This section of the report contains detailed summaries of the presentations given by practitioners, together with some of the charts and photographs they used. Presentations generally combined short overview narratives about their projects’ contexts and work with a more specific set of responses to the questions.

FRESH PRODUCE FARMING

TECHNOSERVE SOUTH AFRICA

Anold Derembwe

Our work focuses on skilling the farmers themselves; we do not have our own funds to use for supporting farmers but lobby farming and commercial organisations for money that we channel towards the farmers. We help farmers to do their planning; everything we do is market-oriented. On our website we provide business solutions to poverty based on markets. If there’s anything that farmers are going to do that is not linked to markets, we don’t encourage that.

We do the market research on behalf of the farmers; we can then agree with them on what they need to do, provided there is a market outlet for what they produce. We do the farm

14 The questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.
business planning with them – this is part of the capacity-building work: cost of inputs, operational overheads, does revenue cover costs, etc. We try to build capacity through helping them to manage the enterprise. But the critical part of it for us in all the places that we work is to try to create critical mass in terms of volumes, of both backward and forward linkages. We help farmers to organise so that they can collectively source their inputs, collectively go to the markets, provide reliable supplies to customers, and so on. Customers won’t be interested in buying from a farmer who just supplies ten cartons of tomatoes today, and then again six months later – that’s not reliable. So part of our work is to find out who is doing what and when, within a cluster of farmers; and to help farmers organise their planting and harvesting so that they can market into the organised value chains. We encounter farmers who, for example, will let a crop of cabbages spoil in the fields while they wait for the market to offer the price they want – so that in the end what they get for the spoiled cabbages won’t even cover their costs of production. The knowledge that we impart to farmers is that they have to think of their 2-hectare plot as a business – moving away from the traditional subsistence farming approach of selling a surplus, to see farming as a business.

We have been fortunate to be one of the first organisations to work with Massmart, which has made a commitment to fostering and supporting small business and agriculture. We got funds from them to promote smallholder farming, the condition being that the greater part of the production goes to Massmart outlets. We have also worked with Pick ‘n Pay in the Limpopo region. These are organisations that have invested in smallholder farming, for both infrastructure and training. We do the training, using advisors and mentors. Most of our mentors are very experienced farmers. The help they give to farmers ranges from refurbishing the irrigation system to planning their production, crop husbandry, advice on pesticides, etc. They are in constant touch with the farmers; my Zimbabwean experience on my family’s farm taught me about the value of having constant support from extension officers. We are in the KwaZulu-Natal region, also in the Limpopo region where farmers are working with Tiger Brands – and you’d be surprised at what the farmers are doing there, using simple drip irrigation, getting water from the river. This is a loose value chain, in terms of the typologies discussed earlier. They supply cherry tomatoes to Tiger Brands; on one occasion I watched a small-scale farmer loading R100 000 worth of tomatoes onto his truck. They have buyers coming from as far afield as Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Botswana.
Where Technoserve works

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Northern KZN</th>
<th>KZN Midlands</th>
<th>Northern Limpopo</th>
<th>Southern Limpopo</th>
<th>Lowveld</th>
<th>Middle &amp; Lowveld</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Potential farmers</td>
<td>100–200</td>
<td>100–300</td>
<td>200–500</td>
<td>100–200</td>
<td>100–300</td>
<td>100–200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current farmers</td>
<td>~ 50 supported 14 in production</td>
<td>~ 87 supported 4 in production</td>
<td>~ 50 supported 8 in production</td>
<td>~ 87 supported 1 in production</td>
<td>~ 124 supported 5 in production</td>
<td>~ 14 supported 14 in production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area planted</td>
<td>25 ha</td>
<td>21.51 ha</td>
<td>35.5 ha</td>
<td>7 ha</td>
<td>15.5 ha</td>
<td>14.5 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales so far</td>
<td>14 mT butternut since June</td>
<td>400 kg spinach since June</td>
<td>180 mT butternut since June</td>
<td>First harvest before end of July</td>
<td>20 mT cocktail tomatoes butternut in September</td>
<td>Supplied tomatoes up to June (R428 000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most important issue here is to teach the farmers what to do, and when, and how – but taking them from their experiences through to the point where they are able to trade on their own. We work with farmers for 3–5 years, and within 3 years we feel we have capacitated the farmers, and helped them to participate in the value chain. We also work in the North West region.

At the moment we’re trying to do what most people would say doesn’t make sense – to upgrade small-scale poultry farmers. It sounds unreasonable to farm livestock on a small scale, but we’ve realised that there is a gap, there are people who are doing it – and if we don’t help them, how are they going to break through into the value chain? In Zimbabwe you’ll find farmers who have 600 broilers, and they sell them like hot cakes. Here there is also a market for small-scale poultry produce, but it’s not an organised one. The critical factor here is infrastructure; without the right infrastructure everything is difficult. And what does the market require? If farmers can’t produce good quality the market won’t take it. We help farmers to improve the quality of what they sell. This is what extension services should do. We can only work on a small scale, unlike government; but what we are doing can serve as a model that can be scaled up to reach as many smallholder farmers as possible.

“The most important issue here is to teach the farmers what to do, and when, and how – but taking them from their experiences through to the point where they are able to trade on their own.”
Useful lessons from projects

**Crowding in various funding forms is key to success**

- **Technical support**
  To minimise failure competent technical and admin staff are required. Grant finance to a TA provider like TechnoServe is key for the sustainability of such programmes.
  
  Possible sources: ED funds, Govt grants (Jobs Fund), CSI funds (ABSA/SBSA)

- **Inputs finance**
  Soft interest-free input loans are a useful tool to kick off projects.
  Crowding in input suppliers (e.g. Omnia, Sakata) can be a source of input funding.
  DFIs (Land Bank, Masisizane, WDB, Ithala) are also key partners to leverage softer finance.
  Commercial banks can come in when farmers achieve commercial-level productivity.

- **Infrastructure finance**
  Government finance and long-term asset finance are the best sources, but only work if farmers are fully commercial. John Deere has a tractor solution which is being rolled out in KwaZulu-Natal Midlands.

**Logistics are key to keeping costs down and increasing reliability**

- **Post-harvest handling facilities** are a vital step in the logistics chain for consolidating and quality checking produce.

- **Linking in with existing logistics operations** will help to ensure better priced logistics costs from areas such as Jozini, Musina and even Nkomazi (back-loads, consolidated loads, etc.).

- **First-leg transport** from emerging farmers is still a bit of a challenge.

**Major challenges still exist**

- **Larger operations** are harder to manage and negotiate with.

- **Smaller farms** have a higher risk of suffering from poor management and side-selling issues.

- **On-farm quality control** during and post-harvest remains a challenge.

- **Dedicated rural staging facilities** are key in ensuring that all produce landing at pack houses is of acceptable quality.

- **In order to have sustainable supply into the retailers, there need to be core BEE supply farms** that are corporately managed.

“We help farmers to improve the quality of what they sell. This is what extension services should do.”
**Post-presentation Discussion**

**Tozamile Lukhalo:** In terms of Ben’s typology, which category of smallholder are you working with?

**Anold Derembwe:** We don’t limit who we work with – on the ground we find farmers in all the categories in Ben’s typology. And we work with all of them.

**Francis Wilson:** In fact you are working with subsistence-oriented smallholders as well as market-oriented smallholders.

**Ben Cousins:** How realistic is it to work with subsistence-oriented smallholders and ask them to supply a tight value chain? The level of support which Technoserve provides is very intensive; farmers are told what to do every week – they have a spraying programme, a fertilisation programme, mentors are there for 3–5 years. I don’t think it’s possible for anyone to provide that level of support for hundreds of thousands of farmers.

**Diane Pieters:** What decisions does Technoserve make for farmers and what decisions do they make for themselves?

**AD:** We don’t make the decisions for the farmers; they make the decisions. But we are an interested partner; we get funding from both public and corporate sources and we have to account for those funds. This means that to some extent we twist the farmers’ hand, but not in a bad way – we want results, so we are hard on them. We make decisions with the farmers about what they can achieve.

**Mbongeni Maziya:** We found that farmers want us to help them with their gardens from which they eat, as well as with what they sell to the nearby market. These are not watertight compartments. And they tell us, we don’t want consultants, mentors. We can produce ourselves – the money you give to mentors you should give to us to fix equipment etc. There is another dynamic operating in communities themselves; they would prefer to have an ‘expert’ supporting them who lives in the community with them, rather than a mentor or someone who just visits from time to time and then goes away again.

**AD:** I’ve been involved in projects where the money is used for things other than farming, or there are fly-by-night mentors. I agree that it makes more sense when the mentor resides in the area or close by. And the business advisors we use in most cases are from within the area – young people working with farmers on the ground. It’s about how genuine the people working with the farmers are; you can put in all the money you like but if the people are not genuine it will go elsewhere.
Categories of farmer we work with

We work in rural areas, and on entering into the Siyavuna programme the farmers we work with are in the subsistence or smallholder category in terms of Ben Cousins’ Typology B, and usually dependent on government grants. Our programmes are all about creating mindshift changes, and so they transition very quickly into the next category – market-oriented smallholders in loose value chains. We then have a category of more advanced farmers, and they are at the moment aspiring to work in tight value chains, working with us to achieve that. That is the transitional space where we are active.

Our vision is to empower rural organic farmers. Our work was inspired by and built on the work of Dr Norman Reynolds, where the starting point is working with a community, working with what you have rather than with ‘big wishes’ – an economic model which we have applied to agriculture. When we did our pilot study in 2008, communities came back to us and said: what we have are land, labour and agricultural know-how.

At the heart of what we do is stimulating local economic participation, financial independence and sustainability, and adopting a pro-poor approach to value chain development. A statement that captures our vision very well was made in this year’s State of the Province Address by the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal: “In particular, we want to stress the need to develop local, small economies. There are any number of best practices all over the globe that indicate this strategy of local economic development is key to job creation and pushing up the GDP of the country.” That’s what our work is all about – creating small local economies. Our dream and vision is that a rural community has money circulating within it – not only through agriculture but involving the whole value chain, with many different businesses operating. The multiplier effect of cash circulating within communities is built into our model.

Our mission is to train and mentor emerging organic farmers for food security, developing successful micro-enterprises through Farmers Associations and co-operatives that market produce under the Kumnandi brand.

We work in Ugu District, in 10 communities, with 600 farmers. They have varied levels of education, but generally working on a low base; the average age is 54, with 84% being
women and 16% men. In terms of selling patterns, 33% of the farmers sell every week; 42% sell once a month or seasonally. This is the case throughout the year. The balance don’t sell, or sell very infrequently. The majority of the farmers receive government grants (pension or child support) and have a cellphone, electricity, an outside tap, and no transport.

A short overview of our process is shown in the diagram alongside. The top row shows the process from the farmer’s perspective; the monthly meeting is a vital part of the model. Farmers may not be interested in selling, only in food security; they can still attend the monthly Farmers Association meetings where they get training and support. If they do want to sell, they sign up for the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS), the organic monitoring model - since our work is all organic – and get a membership card. The Farmers Association decides on collection points in their community, and farmers deliver their produce to these points on foot or with wheelbarrows – for farmers with larger amounts of produce than they can transport like this, Siyavuna now goes around collecting directly from them.

The bottom row of the diagram shows the process from the co-op’s perspective. This is not a growing co-op, it’s a buying and selling co-op like an old-fashioned farmers’ co-op. The arrow between top and bottom rows indicates that each Farmers Association (one per area) elects its own leadership – chairperson, secretary and community fieldworker – and they send two representatives to serve on the co-op board. The co-op board meets monthly, and its job is to run the business of buying and selling the produce, and identify whatever forms of support the farmers need. They organise going to the 24 collection points once a week; they take the produce straight to the pack house, where it’s refrigerated, packaged, and the brand added.

The collection points are also places where farmers can buy and sell tools, seedlings, produce and so on. Each collection point also functions as a trading hub. This is also where they get paid their cash.

We’ve started doing value-added this year, and the salad packs and coleslaw packs are flying off the shelves. The brand is a big part of the success – it eliminates competition among the farmers to sell their produce individually to shops; we are all identified as Kumndandi farmers and we sell together for the brand.

“The brand is a big part of the success – it eliminates competition among the farmers to sell their produce individually to shops; we are all identified as Kumndandi farmers and we sell together for the brand.”
Siyavuna’s three pillars of service are:

- **training** farmers and **mentoring** them one-on-one;
- **supporting the co-op** to be a successful business – our goal is that the co-op will no longer need us;
- help with setting up **market linkages**.

The whole system is underpinned by the PGS, which is a peer-to-peer monitoring system. When I first joined Siyavuna I was dubious that it would be effective, but I’ve been proven wrong – and the trick is in the brand. The farmers see that the brand is connected to their livelihood, and so they want to protect the brand. Because of that, they are really serious about PGS. If they suspect someone is using DDT or other chemicals, there’s a whole system of reporting, sending in an investigation team and imposing sanctions. This is all done by the farmers themselves, and they are very strict with each other – all because of the brand.

Looking at emerging opportunities, our biggest asset is the goodwill of the farmers. They are so willing to take on challenges; the level of participation is high, they have a great deal of indigenous knowledge that they’re willing to share. Their participation in decision-making is high and increasing all the time. Government strategies are very supportive of what we do, and we are building good partnerships with the Departments of Agriculture, Local Economic Development and Rural Development and Land Reform. As for customers – we don’t have to chase them, they are chasing after us as the Kumnandi brand becomes increasingly well known. We’ve focused on the local market and we get people phoning us almost weekly from restaurants and other outlets that want organic produce.

An opportunity that we’re grabbing at is to develop the value chain beyond agriculture to cover other business opportunities beyond the agricultural value chain. As well as selling produce, we now have farmers selling seedlings. The Farmers Association chooses one person per area to be the seedling grower – there are ten altogether, and we bring them together at our centre to learn from each other, receive training in running a seedling business, working together to share input costs and meet big orders, etc.

We’re finding that as farmers go to scale, they don’t always get the organic inputs that they need; that’s an area where we are building new small businesses to support the farmers as they want to expand their production.

Now customers are asking for free-range chickens and eggs. Some of the farmers we work with are also poultry producers, and our plan is to start working with them to satisfy this demand. We are also investigating recycling projects that fit very well with the brand, and...
are part of the value chain – for example, building tunnels out of recycled bottles.

**Constraints and challenges** we face are set out in the table below, together with Siyavuna’s responses to them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSTRAINTS AND CHALLENGES</th>
<th>SIYAVUNA RESPONSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FARMERS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Lack of infrastructure especially regarding water and fencing | Savings groups to enable farmers to build up capital/ access micro-finance from their savings group  
Fundraising to provide subsidised infrastructure |
| Literacy levels impede ability for business record-keeping | Engaging other family members in record-keeping business |
| Decreasing the average age of farmers | Younger smallholder growers as role models, value chain |
| **CO-OP**                  |                    |
| Limited business know-how | Capacity building |
| Gluts in supply result in wastage which delays showing profit | Change in strategy (start with demand)  
Investigating bulk buyers – Durban Fresh Produce Market |

Water is an issue that comes up at every meeting – we’re taking this on as a major challenge. Our approach is that we don’t give the farmers much in the way of material support, they must find their own solutions. So now that the whole operation is growing to scale, it’s becoming more urgent for the farmers to find solutions to their water needs and we want to help them with that, partly from the fundraising side. We’ve organised farmers into savings groups facilitated by an organisation that specialises in this, SaveAct, and they’ve saved a lot of money. They can borrow from it, and at the end of the year they get a payout. Some of the farmers are planning to set up their own water systems with their payouts.

We’re also considering ways to involve younger people in farming and related businesses – it’s more stimulating for some of them to run a seedling business, for example, than to be a farmer.

One of the challenges for the co-op is the seasonal glut in produce items that they are committed to buying and that aren’t absorbed by customers – this eats up their profit.

“Now customers are asking for free-range chickens and eggs. Some of the farmers we work with are also poultry producers, and our plan is to start working with them to satisfy this demand.”
margin. One way we are trying to address this is by getting into the tight value chain, for example getting bulk quantities to the Durban Fresh Produce Market. We are also changing our strategy slightly to start with demand coming from the bigger local markets that will pay farmers a decent price (we try to avoid the larger chains that we know will squeeze the farmers on price; this is the farmers’ instruction to us). We then work backwards in two ways from this demand analysis. One way is to provide the information to the seedling growers, so that they can supply seedlings to the farmers in the right quantities for what customers want. The other is to involve the fieldworkers at each collection point – they are tasked to work with the top four or five growers in their area, to engage and negotiate with them about what to grow, using the information we have gathered about demand. There has been a very positive response to this from farmers.

**Support that Siyavuna provides** includes training and mentoring; expertise sourced from specialist agencies such as Aqualima, which provides water solutions to farmers on an individualised basis, and SaveAct which sets up and facilitates savings groups; assistance with farmers’ decision-making processes; administrative support with accounting, stock control, tax and other business issues; and subsidising of infrastructural improvements for which the farmers have raised some of the necessary funds.

Like Technoserve, our mentors are agricultural graduates who live in the area. We’ve borrowed from the Department of Agriculture model of extension officers, and place a mentor in a specific area where they can develop a rapport with the farmers there. We also bring in experts for certain specialised purposes.

As regards decision-making, Siyavuna’s role is to assist farmers in decision-making – but the key point is that farmers must make the decisions themselves in a democratic way. This is the most important feature of our entire model. *If Siyavuna makes the decisions, we learn – but if farmers make the decisions, they are the ones who learn.*

Our role is to give them the information that can help them to make the decisions. The farmers are now maturing in terms of running their businesses, making decisions about which communities to enter, what to produce and so on.
### Decisions made by small-scale farmers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDIVIDUAL FARMERS</th>
<th>DECISIONS MADE ON BEHALF OF FARMERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do I join the Farmers Association and PGS (53% join)?</td>
<td>Date of annual Farmers Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Should I sell all my produce at the co-op or sell privately?</td>
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### Farmers Association

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FARMERS ASSOCIATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>Election (and replacement) of leadership</td>
<td>Funding applications</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collection point sites</td>
<td>Price benchmarking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGS – investigations and sanctions</td>
<td>Schedule for PGS annual inspection and mentoring</td>
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</tbody>
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### Co-ops (made up of elected Farmers Association leadership)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CO-OPS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Logistics (collection and sales routes)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Inclusion of new collection points or exclusion of low-performing collection points</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual planning sessions – strategies and action plans</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Entry into new markets or expansion into new communities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Task teams</td>
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### Future independence from Siyavuna

Our goal is for the farmers and the co-op not to need us. We will continue to oversee the PGS implementation, and to be the holder of the Kumnandi brand. In other respects we are working towards independence for the farmers from our support – progress is not uniform in all respects, but the indications are good.

- We’ve learned that farmers prefer to learn from each other, and farmers who have reached the Advanced (M3) level of training are already acting as trainers themselves. The most successful and talked-about training activities we’ve done are where we go to one of the farmers, and they teach other farmers. Our future strategy is to ‘graduate’ these M3 farmers to M4 independent farmers who can take over the capacity building roles.
- In terms of expertise, both Aqualima and SaveAct are implementing strategies for capacity building to run independently of Siyavuna.

“We’ve learned that farmers prefer to learn from each other, and farmers who have reached the Advanced (M3) level of training are already acting as trainers themselves.”
• With respect to administration, independent company administration by the co-op is still a long way off.
• Subsidies for infrastructural improvement will depend on access to capital through the savings groups – this is the strategy for future capital investments.

In conclusion, I can say that I am very upbeat about the future of our smallholder farmers and co-ops and the success they can achieve. Two key areas where they need to be supported are in finding solutions to water problems, and in capacity building.
In response to questions about the organic dimension of the Kumnnandi brand, Diane explained that prices are set by going to big outlets in the area – Pick ’n Pay, Checkers, Woolworths, Spar – once a month to look at their prices for products like Siyavuna’s, and then calculating an average selling price based on this information which becomes the Kumnnandi selling price. Farmers get a guaranteed 60% of this selling price; prices for the month are displayed on boards at the collection points, and price changes are smsed to farmers. They don’t pitch prices at the organic selling price, rather at the normal retail price because on the South Coast that’s what they feel they can sell at.

The produce does not yet have third-party organic certification; PGS is satisfied with the current quality of Kumnnandi systems and produce. The process of obtaining third-party organic certification is under way at present.

**Brigid Letty:** Are the producers individuals or self-formed groups? Government has a very strong focus on groups and it would be useful to hear more about the alternative individual approach.

**Diane Pieterse:** The starting point in Siyavuna is ‘I grow in my yard’ – i.e. starting with individuals, and then some farmers voluntarily form groups with a few others. The group is not a formalised co-op, they just collaborate on fencing, for example. That’s a model that always seems to work in our community gardens: within a communal area people share fencing and water, but have their own plots because then they take their own PGS card and sell their own produce, get cash on the spot, rather than collectively harvesting. But the majority of our farmers are individuals, and some of them will then get a second plot and a third plot, starting to employ people to work on these plots.

**Wim van Averbeke:** What is the combined gross annual income of the 600 farmers connected to Siyavuna, and the value of the support being provided?

**DP:** Currently their income is still very small, but in my view it has the potential to quadruple. Expenditure from Siyavuna amounts to more than this income, but that is expected since the project works according to a social model, and donor funds are used to help the co-ops get off the ground. The co-ops are stand-alone businesses – their money doesn’t come to Siyavuna. Each co-op pays for its own staff salaries, vehicles etc.

**Rauri Alcock:** The question all projects should address in their presentation is what the scalability of the project is into the state sector, as answering this question would be a way of answering all the other questions that projects have been asked to respond to.
AS AN NGO, we don’t have the answers. We’re on a learning curve, trying to design a ‘pattern of learning’ as Michael Aliber said, and that’s what we need to share – the good and the bad. The presentation consists of attempts to answer the questions we were asked to address.

Which social challenges and problems does Timbali respond to?

1. Economy of scale favours the larger farmers – larger-scale farmers get better access to credit, can do better research and so on.
2. Farming has become more demanding and competitive; a much higher level of management skill is now required. In 1994 there were about 79 000 commercial farmers, today there are fewer than 30 000. In this cut-throat environment where the big guys are struggling, how can new entrants survive?
3. Branding is what it’s about: quality has become a commodity (It’s no longer enough to get better. We have to become different.)
4. The average age of farmers in South Africa today is 62 – this is quite a challenge.

To address the challenge of economies of scale, the Timbali model is based on clustering. Each green block in the diagram alongside represents an owner-operated unit, whether it’s 1 000 m² in a tunnel for flowers or 30 hectares of vegetables on tenured land. The clustering allows for economies of scale with respect to bulk buying, logistics, market access and infrastructure.

How do we address the management challenge? This is an emotional challenge; we deal with it through our business development process which is based on the Business Format Franchise. We are very much inspired by the McDonalds model: we look for a paint-by-numbers way for small-scale farmers to get into the value chain. In McDonalds you have low-skilled people driving a system of preparing hamburgers anywhere in the world, in any language, with a predictable quality – and they can do this not just once a month or once a week but 365 days of the year. The system provides the predictable-quality product every day. And at the end of the day management is about systems. The true product of a business is not what it sells but how it sells it.

In terms of our branding, our farmers are clustered together as AmaBlom (cut flowers),
AmaVeg and now also AmaMe, the land tenure farmers who are also clustered but sell under their own brand or name.

There are three Timbali models used with different groups of farmers. These are set out in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Timbali Tactics Table</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tactics Defined</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1. Timbali’s role and relationship with farmers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2. Characteristics of the model</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3. Benefits</strong></td>
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</table>

In Model A, Timbali is in control of the whole system. Model B works with land tenure farmers; farmers can decide how much they want to adhere to quality standards. Model C applies to very small-scale subsistence farmers.
**Does Timbali build on any existing positive realities in the contexts in which you work?**

1. Competing against corporate agri-business is not possible for us.
2. Specialisation to supply lucrative niche markets is our aim for our farmers. Most of the AmaBlom farmers are low-skilled unemployed young women, yet they outperformed the average market price for the product in 2013 (see graph below).

![Graph showing Rand per stem average comparison: Market vs AmaBlom](image)

We could achieve this because of our view that branding of the product is essential.

**What are the key emerging opportunities we respond to?**

1. We are trying to duplicate the appropriate model in partnership with DAFF, Seda and LDA in Limpopo. We work with their support, and in response to their invitation
2. to provide sustainable market access through coordinated production
3. using this Agri-Park environment as an entry level job trainer in South Africa.

The way this process works is shown in terms of the four key objectives set out in the diagram below.
The cluster development provides the enabling environment where fledgling apprentice farmers have the opportunity to grow into independent competitive agri-franchise enterprises.

How does Timbali respond to the particular conditions, constraints and challenges it faces?

1. Low skill and literacy levels among farmers – the system is the solution to this.
2. By plugging farmers into a supply chain and into markets through a system of support – this provides them with an enabling and structured environment in which they know what to do and are supported to do it.
3. Global competitiveness, productivity and eco-sustainability – this is a huge challenge. We are developing an informed decision-making structure for certified quality
“The farmers don’t change what they do from day to day; they follow the system to maintain the quality of their product. But within this system there’s the freedom for them to sit around the table and make decisions about the system itself…”

4. Sustainable market access – helping farmers to find unclaimed yet profitable market space through branding and then keep that market.

5. We work with the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) - “Entrepreneurial activity is best seen as a process rather than an event”.

Which key decisions do small-scale farmers make themselves?

In our business development model we have weekly Quality Management Meetings and monthly Cluster Body Meetings. The farmers don’t change what they do from day to day; they follow the ‘yellow brick road’ of the system to maintain the quality of their product. But within this system there’s the freedom for them to sit around the table and make decisions about the system itself: should they change it, and if so, how? The system is collectively owned by the farmers, and there is room for innovation.

The business development process consists of three elements:
- Innovation: Measure to know if innovation is working. Doing more with less.
- Quantification: The sad fact is that record-keeping is not being done in most agri-businesses, and it’s costing them a fortune.
- Orchestration: ‘If you haven’t orchestrated it you don’t own it.’ The farmers choose how to respond to break-neck change, price pressure and desperate competitors.

Even though farmers may be illiterate, we have tools they can use to evaluate and monitor their performance, like the chart alongside.

This type of tool is also used to help the farmers manage questions of logistics, pricing etc. Through informed decision-making they can manage their own costs and plan for success in the market. In effect we are packaging this training in business skills and bringing it to farmers, especially young farmers, so that they can grow more sustainable businesses.

How much external support does your programme provide to small-scale producers?

1. Training: we focus on Key Performance Indicators for each farmer, e.g. are you delivering the quantity of marrows you have planned to deliver on a weekly basis (see Weekly Transport chart below)? We also look at training in financial management and problems of absenteeism (see graph of average monthly prices below).

2. Funding per participant per year varies per Model A, B or C. The total turnover of our farmers this past year was just over R11 million. The cost per farmer in the controlled environment of our incubator is R37 000.

3. Expertise (e.g. in advice and guidance)- technical financial and marketing.
4. Decision-making (e.g. in relation to marketing) – growing programmes (with AmaVeg these are dictated by the retailers such as Woolworths, export companies and local markets); business plans; market feedback (which happens within hours as farmers hear if there are rejects in their produce) is dealt with at the Quality Management Meetings; financial and technical performance are mainly dealt with at the Cluster Body Meetings.

5. Other kinds of support – introduction of farmers to suppliers, markets and industry specialists and peers. We play a huge role in this regard as big suppliers won’t come near individual small farmers.

Weekly Transport comparison sheet for Gerbera and Lisianthus units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oct. '13</th>
<th>Unit 01</th>
<th>Unit 02</th>
<th>Unit 03</th>
<th>Unit 04</th>
<th>Unit 05</th>
<th>Unit 06</th>
<th>Unit 07</th>
<th>Unit 08</th>
<th>Unit 09</th>
<th>Unit 10</th>
<th>Unit 11</th>
<th>Unit 12</th>
<th>Unit 13</th>
<th>Unit 14</th>
<th>Unit 15</th>
<th>Lisianthus</th>
<th>Total box</th>
<th>% Over/under</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>07/10/13</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>46</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td>46</td>
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<td>44</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1439</td>
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<td>08/10/13</td>
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<td>79</td>
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<td>44</td>
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<td>09/10/13</td>
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<td>87</td>
<td>62</td>
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<td>1379</td>
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<td>12/10/13</td>
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<td>72</td>
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<td>66</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1379</td>
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</table>

Average price per month per unit

-90 boxes/buckets per week
Identify key differences amongst the small-scale farmers you work with, in relation to gender, age, education and wealth.

Education and gender characteristics of our farmers are given in the graphs on this page.

This predominance of woman-owned farmers is not by planning, it’s a product of the social environment in which Timbali works.

Does the programme seek to support local institutional development, and if so, how?

We have a very good relationship with the Limpopo Department of Agriculture (LDA), as well as with their district and local offices. But in the nature of this kind of structure there are silos. Careful planning took place between the Timbali Task Team and LDA extension team at the beginning of 2014, but notwithstanding clear communication and agreed planning there are still sometimes agenda clashes. This is something that we continue to work on, attending meetings with LDA structures and working with their staff. A master plan for infrastructure requirements for the entire LDA Nwanedi district of 300 farmers was developed by collaborating across silos; this involved Timbali, LDA provincial and district offices and Aurecon.

How does learning take place within Timbali?

- Staff members are trained in Timbali’s incubation language and system solution. Although we are not in fact a franchise structure, we borrow from that environment in the way our system works. We use our ‘franchise’ system designed to monitor tasks and responsibilities to be able to accurately reach deadlines; and we manage and train the staff through a franchise model, so that the same language is used throughout. This structured environment loosens them up to be able to manage their systems better.
- The system enables staff to provide a predictable quality service to our client-farmers.
- The supply chain incubator allows the clustered farmers to immediately supply a customer that requires CGAP certification.
- Access to loan financing is through MEGA: the farmers sign cession agreements in favour of Timbali, and receive levies.
- Access to formal markets is through branding – Multiflora and Woolworths (AmaBlom), Woolworths, retailers, export, and Johannesburg Fresh Produce Market (AmaVeg).
The **product support chain** is considered the single greatest infrastructure constraint to the growth of the small-scale farmer.

We’ve done research into how our farmers want to be communicated with. We’ve learned that farmers don’t like reading; they want pictures, audio and video communication. We use images like the one alongside to communicate with them about how the model works, who the funders are, the links between on-site and off-site efficiencies and so on.

**Will the small-scale farmers be able to operate on their own at some point, without the external support that you provide?**

We do this in three ways:

- By making previously invisible processes visible, improvement can be identified.
- Farmers have an Operations and Procedures Manual, which is a tool for performance mapping, training and implementing change. A page of the manual is shown alongside.
- The common language that farmers use in the incubation model means that they have a way of sharing best practices with each other.

We don’t do accredited training, we do ‘competency development’ through leadership training, improving organising ability and a focus on attention to detail. An example of how we address eco-sustainability through competency development is shown in the table on the next page. We also use ABC – Asset-Based Community Development – focusing on how to use existing resources that farmers have available.

**Does your programme address the larger structural constraints facing small-scale farmers, in any way?**

Timbali spent many hours during 2013 assisting LDA and Aurecon with the Nwanedi Infrastructure Development Plan.

This entailed developing the following:

- **Pack house** specification for quality and quantity per crop with specified unit price, seasonal sales and services
- **Inwash grading station** to serve as a concentration point of delivery for the to be more involved in grading and managing their produce
- **Proper irrigation infrastructure** for consistency in supply
- **Irrigation specifications** (indigenous knowledge that is a strong tradition)
- **Food safety** awareness
What are the key policy lessons you would like to offer to government, based on your practical experience?

- 20% of farmers produce 80% of the turnover. Game Changers need to do something about this – but what?
- Focus on small-scale farmers to address inequality. This focus on small-scale farmers is now a global trend; Syngenta is interested in using the Timbali model in countries across Africa.
- Provide small-scale farmers with a structured, easily scalable tool for improving excellence by borrowing from the franchise industry.

Which government policies and programmes are most relevant to Timbali?

A holistic integrated model as a grassroots implementation tool for:
- awareness
- agri-enterprise development
- improved competitiveness
- job creation
- bringing new young entrants into agriculture.

The New Growth Path Framework:
- National Skills Development Accord
- Green Economy Accord
- Local Procurement Accord

Our plan for the next five years is to expand Timbali Business Units (TBUs) to other regions in the country, as shown on the map alongside.
Francois Lategan: Where is the Achilles heel of Timbali? – that is, in the overall system and models that Timbali has developed, where is the weak spot?

Louise de Klerk: It’s a model that needs time and human energy to succeed – it’s not a quick-fix process, even though it’s franchisable.

Francis Wilson: We are seeing the central role that human effort and experience play in all the projects present at this action-dialogue.

Lungisa Matshimane, a Timbali farmer attending the action-dialogue: In the two higher-risk models Timbali uses with land tenure and small-scale farmers who don’t follow the tightly controlled path of Model A, the Timbali ‘experts’ can advise the farmers, but it’s up to them what they choose to do. It’s their own ideas, and peer pressure, that influence whether they change or improve their approach.

Ben Cousins: Looking at the current numbers of farmers involved in Timbali and Siyavuna, if we put these numbers in context Siyavuna and Timbali are very rich experiences from which we can learn, but in terms of scale they aren’t doing anything like what places like Tugela Ferry (with 1 000 farmers) are doing with no real help from anyone (there’s a virtually non-existent extension service). The NDP says we can create a million jobs with smallholder farming, but it’s not clear how this can be done. I challenge the presenters and the group as a whole to respond to the question of how the projects being discussed can be scaled up to create a million jobs.

Wim van Averbeke: The focus on extension officers providing knowledge and skills development is not perhaps the most useful one: once knowledge and skills have been brought into an area, the transfer happens among the farmers themselves, and within farming families. The extension officers are no longer needed for this. What extension can do is to extend the small-scale farmers’ access to more sophisticated markets, build relationships of trust with commercial markets so that they treat small-scale farmers with respect. There is an oversupply of produce – the real problem is markets.

Brigid Letty: There is often a question raised about what the cost of support is, when this comes from projects like Siyavuna – but it is important to remember that government also has costs – salaries, vehicles etc. We mustn’t complain that NGOs provide costly support and forget the costs of government. If an NGO like Siyavuna could institutionalise the roles that it plays in terms of market linkages and other support services – i.e. if these roles could be internalised within government structures – that could make a difference without requiring additional funds.
I have spent most of my life in the corporate sphere, designing food supply chains. At a certain point I realised that the food supply chains I’d been designing worked for Mrs Constantia but not for Mrs Khayelitsha – in other words, the food supply chains designed by big corporate concerns and in which we have invested so heavily in this country work very well for a certain section of the population, but not for everybody, not for the poor. I became disillusioned with what I was doing, felt that some of what we are doing in the corporate sector doesn’t work for the poor, and perhaps never can work for them. As a result I moved out of this sector and now work as an independent agent. I’m engaged part-time in private sector sustainability initiatives where I believe a long-term impact can be made, and the title of the presentation, ‘Enabling smallholder based food systems’, indicates what the typical focus of my work is.

I am also involved in a project, the Southern Africa Food Lab, which functions as a safe space for dialogue and experimentation on system change in the food supply chain. The Food Lab is a civil society initiative bringing together diverse stakeholders to collaborate and identify innovative means of acting within agro-food value chains to enhance long-term food security. It is essentially a platform for dialogue and action. We organise a lot of forums like this one, bringing together stakeholders from across the food system; we also organise programmes of activities that can take these dialogues further into action. An example of this is the Supporting Smallholder Agriculture (SSA) programme which we ran together with PLAAS for a year from 2013 – a series of social dialogues to define innovations, drawing on research done by PLAAS. Throughout the year we looked at how we could get involved in system change. We have now moved to the next, experimental phase, involving journeys out into the field. In this phase we are concerned with two specific issues, market access and support for smallholder farmers. The key elements of these two phases of the work are shown in the figures alongside, including the five innovations we have introduced to support smallholder farmers.

The people doing this work are multi-stakeholder teams that were formed in the course of the initiatives – government, private sector and NGO people working together in the two areas where we are active, Mopani District in Limpopo and Umkhanyakude District in KwaZulu-Natal.
In addition to my involvement in the SA Food Lab, I am working with an initiative to create an opportunity for supporting farmers to move from loose value chains to tight value chains at the local level. One retailer that offers quite a lot of prospects in this regard is Spar, for two reasons: Spar has a number of rural stores, and many of these stores are owned by franchisees. The individuals who own these local franchises know that to be relevant, they need to source their produce locally rather than from suppliers 500 km away. They know customers will walk away from them if they aren’t supporting local farmers. This is a model that could be followed by other retailers, but it involves some effort on their part to learn about farming in their area, and the retailers who have followed this model tend to be those that come from an agricultural background. The model could be applied at district scale in other places where there are large numbers of smallholder farmers on rich agricultural land, closely located to retailers within a district.

This initiative has now received some funding from the Dutch government to get it going. The catalyst has been the parent body of local Spar, a global organisation based in the Netherlands. We’re looking at implementation of the model in rural areas as a trial; it’s a project with wider implications than Spar – we are looking at making infrastructure available to a wider range of participants in the market. If we can create a hub of this kind in the rural areas, that hub should be available to hawkers and other traders in that market.

So – this is a model being trialled that could impact more widely on farmers and loose value chains. It involves collaboration with a wide range of organisations; we are already having discussions with the IDC and other potential partners, to form a broad consortium of companies that can be involved. It’s about enabling localisation, building local food economies.

Policy implications

With regard to the policy implications of SA Food Lab’s work and also of the other presentations given thus far, I can offer the following observations.

- In any policy development process it is important to differentiate between different categories of farmers, as Ben Cousins said in his paper.
- Distinguish between the needs of the various types of smallholders.
- Identify opportunities that represent suitable land-water-farmers-market combinations to be encouraged within LED strategies – loose and tight value chains – as Wim van Averbeke said in his presentation. Government must be responsive to different cases and different areas in its strategies.
- Place marketing at the centre of planning – market-led opportunities for loose and tight...
This implies a collaborative relationship between government and business/marketing organisations - interaction between business, government and support programmes.

- With regard to central planning and projects versus initiatives that seek to find out how to strengthen what works - the “build on what’s there model”, as Michael Aliber argued - move from a master planning approach to looking at what works in different contexts, and be open to experimentation and learning. SA Food Lab operates as an experiment-based organisation and will only accept funding which doesn’t constrain this.
- Be more open to experimentation and learning, and to continuing to question our assumptions about what we are trying to do, i.e. create flexibility in policies and programmes.
- Market-led collaboration is the key element that must be fostered and supported to enable localisation.
- Weak support services are a real concern, as is evident in the discussions - this is an important issue given the concern about the scalability of programmes run by NGOs into the state system.
- Through the Food Lab we are working closely with the DAFF on the new extension and advisory services policy. That policy is calling for collaboration - it’s a wonderful piece of policy, acknowledging the weaknesses of existing extension services and the need to work together with others to provide these services. This support needs to be customised to suit farmers in the different categories in Ben Cousins’ typology. SA Food Lab will be experimenting with this policy in Umkhanyakude District to see how the provisions of this policy, especially those relating to collaboration, can work best for the farmers.
**FIELD CROP FARMING**

**Grain SA: An introduction to Conservation Agriculture**

*Hendrik Smith*

The starting point for the presentation is a group of photographs of ‘Dust Bowl’ conditions in the USA in the 1930s, followed by photographs of Bloemfontein in 2014 and north-west Free State in 2013 where the dry and eroded conditions of the land are evident. The ‘Dust Bowl’ in the US was the catalyst for farmers to start thinking about how to preserve the soil, developing innovations focused on improving the land, and implementing conservation-oriented agriculture practices. About a decade after this, governments and technical experts came on board to consider how these practices could be improved; these efforts subsequently spilled over into other countries like Canada, Australia and also South Africa. The point to remember is that farmers were in the forefront of the drive to develop conservation agriculture (CA).

These practices started to make an impact in South Africa from about the 1960s onwards, with farmers and government involved in later decades, but although the situation has improved, the problem is still there – we are still faced with mini-‘dust bowls’ from time to time. Wind erosion and water erosion are main causes of the loss of good soil. The map alongside shows actual water erosion rates in South Africa in 2010, and the loss of soil particularly in grain-producing areas of the country.

In general the problem is not being successfully dealt with by existing practices; the goal of CA is to move from an intensive tillage system that destroys the soil to a much more stable, sustainable system that conserves the soil and also addresses the issue of food security. The focus of the presentation will be on the first category of farmers in Ben Cousins’ typology – those concerned with food security – and how CA can support them.

CA involves the simultaneous implementation of **three principles**, with quality of implementation:

- Minimal mechanical soil disturbance
- Diversified cropping, including cover crops
- Permanent organic soil cover – mulching (FAO)
A more complicated, integrated CA system would include the following elements:

- Integrated soil fertility and acidity management
- Integrated weed management
- Integrated pest and disease management
- Integration of animals

This is polyfarming, or permaculture – a knowledge-intensive form of CA that can be difficult to implement. Technically these might be better forms of CA, but they will also be harder to scale up. Even implementing the first three principles above is challenging; it depends on technical expertise and specialised equipment.

The economic benefits of CA include the following:

- By not ploughing and not using mechanical weed control, farmers can:
  - save about 70% on labour,
  - using 60% less tractor-hours,
  - 60% less fuel, and
  - save 60% on maintenance costs.
- Increasing crop diversity/rotations, even marginally, can have both large financial and environmental impacts:
  - Cover crops (legumes) can contribute up to 250 kg of soil nitrogen per hectare annually, amounting to cost savings of above R2 000 per hectare on N fertilisers.
  - They can reduce weed seed banks, reduce crop losses to some insect pests and diseases compared to monocropped farming systems. Less agrochemicals are needed.

It is important to get the philosophy of sustainable agriculture right, if we are serious about implementing a CA approach. Real sustainable agricultural systems should be self-sustaining: they should be reproducing themselves in a viral way. In this sense they mimic autopoietic systems; they are self-organising of their own structures, although their processes may be triggered by external factors. The opposite type of system is the allopoietic system, which takes in inputs and turns out products; such a system cannot create more outputs (products) without external inputs – it is not self-reproducing. In the long term an allopoietic system is not sustainable. Most of our systems are allopoietic, i.e. unsustainable. We should at least be aiming to get a balance between the two types of system, so that the allopoietic systems operating today are fuelling autopoietic systems that can generate viral processes. Perhaps the next action-dialogue should be about the philosophy behind the agricultural practices we are engaged in.
Conventional innovation processes depend on technology transfers from researchers via extension officers to farmers in a linear way. A CA innovation process is not linear; innovation emerges through interaction and communication between key stakeholders: researcher, extension officer and farmer. It is primarily a social innovation process – a socially constructed autopoietic system. It’s important in academic circles to use the right theoretical framework so that we can come down from that theory to practice, policies and programmes.

In the theoretical framework underpinning CA the orientation is primarily social, and we talk about constructivism rather than positivism – i.e. CA can only be socially constructed in the reality of the farmer. It’s not pre-designed and then imposed on the farmer’s reality.

The approach taken within the CA theoretical framework is primarily that of the agricultural innovation system (AIS); some complementary approaches are farmer field schools, action research and so on, where the farmer is at the centre of innovation development and implementation. The practical tools used are mostly participatory processes involving farmer groups and networks.

A summary of the key elements making up this AIS is shown in the diagram below.
The central concept of Grain SA’s CA-Farmer Innovation Programme is that **farmers are compulsive innovators**. . .

The CA-Farmer Innovation Programme of Grain SA/Maize Trust is based on this concept of farmer-centred, socially constructed innovation. The programme’s aim is to try to find and develop effective farmer innovation platforms.

The central concept of Grain SA’s CA-Farmer Innovation Programme is that **farmers are compulsive innovators**: what swimming is to a fish, innovation is to farming: every single (decision x action)-moment in a farmer’s life and enterprise requires adaptive innovation and often original, inventing innovation. Our guiding principle in the programme is: ‘Everything we do for (preferably with) farmers will only be sustainable and successful to the extent that we respect, accept and use farmers as innovators.’ This is where real empowerment lies. If we did not adopt this approach we would never create the ‘viral’ effect of an autopoietic system among the farmers. The natural and economic **sciences** play key complementary roles in supporting the whole process. It’s a lifelong process that we design and start with the farmers.

**Responses to the questions practitioners were asked to address at this action-dialogue**

1. Some of the social challenges and problems that we address in the programme:
   - Alleviating household poverty by:
     - increasing net farm income
     - increasing disposable family capital
   - Stabilizing communities
   - Diversifying human and animal food flows
   - Minimizing labour requirements
   - Alleviating the burden born by women
   - Mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS
   - Increasing local social cohesion through stronger social institutions

2. Government policies and programmes that are being addressed by our programme include:
   - CLIMATE SMART AGRICULTURE: The National Climate Change Response Plan and Policy involves all sectors to consider steps to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
   - DAFF: LandCare, etc. We have had a workshop with DAFF around LandCare specifically to integrate CA with LandCare – this is a marriage made in heaven. CA is a farmer-centred community-based programme, and that is what LandCare requires. We’ve been involved with LandCare for about 20 years, and there are a lot of shared experiences.
– DRDLR: Climate Change Adaptation Sector Plan; Agrarian Transformation Strategy; Conservation Agriculture Technologies; etc

3. **Key emerging opportunities:**

– We are working with the Commodity Trusts – specifically the Maize & Winter Cereal Trust – to try and channel some of those funds in this direction, to empower farmers with innovation systems and CA.
– We work closely with LandCare.
– Incentive and market-based mechanisms, e.g. Payment for Ecosystems Services (PES)
– Accredited training – this is a very important initiative, developing accredited curricula for farmers and extension officers, the two key agents involved in AISs and CA, within the official South African OFO/NQF/SAQA/QCTO education process management ecosystem.
– We respond to emerging opportunities through Innovation Platforms on various levels.

4. **Building on any existing positive realities and dynamics:**

– Farmer experience and innovation capacity:
  – ‘all learning starts from what they know’;
  – established farmer-led experimentation process, based on their capacity to experiment.
– Established vibrant local farmer institutions or innovation platforms – we are using the SaveAct model of sustainable savings and credit groups and it works really well; within these credit groups there are commodity interest groups and we use these groups to build capacity in CA.
– We are producing local leadership, farmers who have capacity in CA x AIS whom we are using as local facilitators – this is also working really well.

5. **How do we respond to the particular conditions, constraints and challenges we face?**

– Basically we do this through facilitation of social learning (preferably done by local facilitators) in innovation platforms where participants reflect and respond.
– We are also trying, through this process, to allow these groups to enter the formal economy through the value chain – introducing micro-mills, bulk-buying inputs, selling and marketing, etc.
6. **External support:**

- **Training:** We organise about 3–5 training events per group per year based on the crop calendar. These events are based on the Farmer Field School approach, using discovery learning, their farm as the classroom, etc.

- **Funding:** The cost depends on the implementing agent used in the process:
  - At the moment it costs from R10 000 per participant per year (including professional fees, inputs and equipment). This kind of capital investment incentive could be supported by the government. As was said in earlier discussion, the cost to government of providing support or training through extension officers should also be counted, when comparing costs of support from government and NGOs.

- **Expertise:** Typical expertise needed in this approach is 1 x project coordinator; 1–2 x project facilitators; 3–5 local (farmer) facilitators. It’s important to note that these local facilitators are people living in the community, so this is another aspect of building local capacity.

- **Decision-making:** This happens through the different levels of innovation platforms that we try to create.

7. **Key decisions made by farmers and by the programme:**

- **By small-scale farmers:**
  - 1\textsuperscript{st} season: The really big decision they need to make is whether they want to volunteer – volunteering is one of the sparks for that viral process to start. Without it, there won’t be a sustainable process in the group. They need to provide trial sites, labour, etc.
  - 2\textsuperscript{nd} season: Their decision-making moves on to new levels: types of input (bulk buying), crops, equipment, selection of 5 new farmer volunteers (mentors for 1 season), 5 new trials, new area + 5 new trials, monitoring and evaluation.

- **By programme:**
  - 1\textsuperscript{st} level groups (1\textsuperscript{st} season): social mobilisation + selection of volunteers, CA system, inputs, crops, equipment; but this is not a top-down process, it involves the participants through the Farmer Field School discovery learning process, M&E indicators + process
  - 2\textsuperscript{nd} level groups (2\textsuperscript{nd} season): primarily responsible for facilitation of the Farmer Field School, social learning, programme M&E, action planning, experimentation – this is an iterative and cyclic process.
8. Scaling out:
The diagram alongside shows an example of scaling out: the Farmer Centre is the hub, with
different innovation platforms in different areas.

There are places around the world where Farmer Field Schools have been scaled out to
thousands of farmers – in West Africa, for example. The key thing is that it is an informal
approach, in which the facilitators are not really recognised. The accreditation process is a
form of reward for the work that they do.

9. Local institutional development:
   - Local institutions (innovation platforms) are fundamental to the success of any AIS.
   - We use existing ones where we can, such as credit groups, church, burial, study
groups, CA clubs, etc.
   - We also create new institutions where necessary.
   - In working with existing institutions our processes help to strengthen and/or develop
social capital through social learning, training (Farmer Field Schools), etc.

10. Key differences among the small-scale farmers:
    Some relevant differences among the small-scale farmers involved in the programme are
given in the tables on the next page. From these tables it can be seen that at present the
main source of income for the farmers is social grants.

11. How does learning take place?
    - Through programme staff:
      - Staff are involved in participatory monitoring and evaluation, and participate in
social learning processes with the farmers (through the Innovation Platforms),
discovery/experiential learning in Farmer Field Schools and experimentation
processes.
      - There is a need for accredited training; this is something the programme is
looking at.
    - Small-scale farmers:
      - Learning happens on farms, and is farmer-led – the farmers develop their own
innovation systems. Through this process they take ownership of the process
and are empowered. We build constantly on the farmers’ existing capacity to
experiment – we use them as researchers. This is where government could
come into the process, providing inputs of equipment for small-scale farmers.

- FAO’s FFS programme in
  West Africa (Senegal, Mali
  and Burkina Faso) had
  succeeded, informally, by
  mid-2012 to train more
  than 150,000 smallholder
  farmers and 3,500
  facilitators.
- See:
  http://www.fao.org/agricult
ure/crops/thematic-
sitemap/theme/pests/ipm/i
12. What makes the work sustainable?

It’s all about the confidence that comes from learning, fostered by the innovation process, integrating all the elements of the programme as shown in the diagram below.

13. What about policy? We want to see policy influencing the mainstreaming of this CA innovation approach: it’s all about scaling out, and scaling up and down:

- **Scaling out** as many as possible of these innovation systems in different communities, on the ground.
- **Scaling up** through action-dialogues like this one, on different levels – sharing experiences right up to national and international level, building the elements of the approach into policy.
- **Scaling down**, through policy, to work in projects, and supporting the scaling out on the ground.
Key policy lessons: What would fuel on-farm innovation for autopoietic systems?

- A correct philosophy, paradigm, approach and technologies are essential – without these elements you continually come back to the drawing board.
- Incentive- and market-based mechanisms can play a huge role, e.g. the Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) approach – rewarding farmers for implementing good practices and looking after natural resources more sustainably.
- Accreditation of Occupational Learning and Training (especially for farmers and extension officers), working within CA x AIS. This should include Recognition of Prior Learning on the part of farmers and extension officers, since many of them have a lot of experience.
- Relevant training by tertiary institutions (AIS x CA); at this stage we don’t get people from universities with a combination of CA and AIS – it’s a skill that is totally lacking.
- Bursaries and scholarships for students and interns / facilitators (in AIS) – the extension officers; they should be rewarded with accredited training certificates.
- Sustainable and stable funding, e.g. from the Green Fund, RPL funds, etc.
- Support of local microfinance structures (e.g. savings and credit groups) as sustainable local innovation platforms; consider also the possibility of creating endowment funds.

**POST-PRESENTATION DISCUSSION**

In response to questions about how many farmers the CA programme is working with, and what their yields and budgets are, Hendrik Smith explained that the programme only started last year and has just a few groups so far, but these groups are functioning very well – their success is linked to the strength of the local institutions such as savings clubs and commodity buying groups, which makes them very sustainable. At the moment the projects are fairly low-budget, with 50–100 farmers per project. It takes farmers 3–4 years to master CA practices, but already in the first year there has been a drastic improvement in crop yields and crop diversity; they have introduced high-density inter-cropping systems, legumes and grains, and yields have improved by 50–100% in some cases, using low agro-chemical input systems. The budgets are substantial for these kinds of farmers, but much less than the R7 000–R10 000/ha for commercial farmers. CA, if its principles are correctly implemented, is the only system that will provide farmers with a low-input but sustainable process.

Mikal Lambert of Goedgedacht made the point that there are many similarities between the CA principles and practices described in the presentation and permaculture farming methods – they are both based on the same approach to farming.
**Farmer Support Group**

*Mbongeni Maziya*

The Farmer Support Group (FSG) is a research, community development and outreach unit at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Our projects focus on food security, market access and micro-enterprise development, natural resource management and sustainable agriculture. Our ultimate aim is to enhance agricultural production and the use of natural resources to improve livelihoods.

The FSG Programmes are:
- Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security
- Appropriate Technology and Innovation Development
- Sustainable Natural Resource Management
- Micro-enterprise Development
- Learning in Action

Our strongest element is centred on community development. FSG involves communities to identify development challenges, with emphasis placed on constraints in agriculture that farmers need to deal with. We pay particular attention to issues of gender and HIV/AIDS affecting the farmers and their communities. The majority of our beneficiaries are women, because usually the men are not in the rural areas, they have gone to urban areas to look for employment.

A participatory process is adopted in all stages of project implementation. Most of the women we work with are older women without formal education. This influences the way that we work with them – we sit together with them in groups to discuss topics such as record-keeping, and have to revisit these topics many times because they don’t easily understand what is involved.

**FSG’s areas of operation**

We work in the communal areas that are under traditional authorities in Tugela District and Umzinyathi District. In Tugela District we work in the Okahlamba Municipality and other tribal areas.

The issue of funding is very important, especially with regard to the tribal authority since a lot of travelling is required by FSG facilitators between various tribal authority individuals and offices to get letters of permission to work in the area.
FSG activities include:

- **Farmer Field School sessions** where we teach about:
  - Soil fertility management
  - Water conservation
  - Weed management

- This teaching is done through farmer-led demonstrations and experiments to improve agricultural production.

- We provide farmers with a platform to exchange knowledge through multi-stakeholder workshops, farmers’ forums, exchange visits and field days. Farmers’ forums are opportunities to discuss problems affecting the area such as specific diseases, and to share information. Exchange visits involve taking farmers to another area where we feel they could learn from what is being done there; for example if we have farmers who want to produce seedlings, we take them to a commercial farm that produces seedlings to learn about how it is done.

- We also capacitate farmers in understanding market access and needs, as well as providing leadership skills to enable farmers, especially women, to make informed decisions. Market access is not really a problem for the farmers in our areas – the market is there, and the local businesses are willing to buy from farmers in the area. The problem is production – farmers can’t supply what these businesses want at the times that they want the produce. This is an area where we should be aiming to help farmers improve their practices. We don’t make decisions for the farmers, rather we advise them once they have decided what it is that they want to achieve.

Challenges we face in the rural areas:

- **High unemployment and low income levels; as a result poverty levels are also high.**

- There are no major industries in rural areas. People who are employed have jobs in the retail sector or in the informal sector. We hear all the time that young people don’t want to do farming, but we have found that the youth in the area are willing to get jobs on farms – only they want to do certain types of farming, not ploughing, feed crop farming and so on. They would rather work with poultry, for example. We need to consider this issue when we think about engaging the youth in agriculture. FSG has facilitated the formation of youth groups who have an interest in agriculture in the Okhahlamba area.

- FSG collaborates with different stakeholders, but we have found that there is a need to improve collaboration between various stakeholders so that efforts are directed towards a common goal. For example, farmers decide to plant certain crops based on what we tell
“...small-scale farming has the potential to contribute to food security, if farmers can be capacitated with the necessary technical skills to increase their output – many rural households buy very little food in the local shops, they grow much of what they consume. . .”

them about what the hotels in the area or other markets will buy in that season; their plans are then disrupted when government comes to them with different inputs and plans.

- Levels of production remain low, which means farmers can’t supply what the markets want from them.
- Available technologies do not suit the needs of small-scale farmers. For example most of these farmers don’t have draught animals, they have to hire a tractor when they want to plough.
- There has been pressure on farmers to form a co-operative if they want to access funding from government. People recruit neighbours and friends to form these co-ops, and then can’t put pressure on them to come to work when they fail to do so. There has been a rash of failures of co-operatives; this way of funding farmers is not working well for them.
- Land for production is there, but most of it is not used – people don’t have fencing, or the land is far from a water source.
- FSG has sourced local markets for small-scale farmers, but there is often a lack of transport for them to get their produce to these markets.
- Farmers who can produce have insufficient expertise in grading their produce; the result is that shops reject the produce they supply. It’s an area that needs support to improve farmers’ skills.

In conclusion, our experience in FSG has shown us that small-scale farming has the potential to contribute to food security, if farmers can be capacitated with the necessary technical skills to increase their output – many rural households buy very little food in the local shops, they grow much of what they consume. Most small-scale farmers are located in rural areas and there is a market in the rural areas for their produce, including not only retail outlets but also other outlets such as school feeding schemes.

**POST-PRESENTATION DISCUSSION**

Several practitioners made the point that there are major obstacles to working in KwaZulu-Natal, especially with the Ingonyama Trust, amakhosi, and izinduna whose frameworks are far behind current developments in the sphere of agriculture. Rauri Alcock suggested that a letter from the Department of Public Works giving permission for FSG to operate on government-owned public land or for other events might cut through some of the tribal authority’s bureaucratic barriers. He argued that this is not essentially a problem stemming from the chiefs – it’s about how government views its ‘private property’ in terms of public rights to use this property.
**Path out of Poverty, Goedgedacht**

Peter Templeton

We work in rural areas, and have a different take on things from a number of the practitioners here today. We run a programme called Path out of Poverty (POP), working with young people. It takes 25 years, and is very expensive – so it has all the characteristics of a programme that should fail rapidly.

If we take the lifespan of a human being, say 0–70 years, the POP programme starts before the child is born. We believe this is a very important period for the child; and we then focus intensively on the first 1 000 days of life which we believe are very important for young people. We live and work in an area where foetal alcohol syndrome is rife, and children are born already damaged. Ninety per cent of the brain develops within the first 1 000 days of life, and if that is not taken seriously then we’re in trouble.

The state generally starts after that time, at preschool level, and then supports you once you start schooling, but the period 0–3 is of vital importance and no one really takes it seriously. Without support for children in the womb and in these first 3 years, you have a generation of children coming into the world who are damaged, or will face extreme difficulties and need more support for longer.

Our contention is that the support that is most important involves the ‘soft skills’ relating to the individual: – education, health, personal development and care for the planet. The POP programme covers these four pillars.

The main focus of most programmes is technical: training people in a skill – bricklaying, carpentry and so on. But we’re saying that the skills they get before these skills are critical – confidence, courage, endurance, persistence, an ability to respond to problems that are not that obvious – to make them rounded human beings. We are trying to do what any parent will do for their children if they are concerned for the child’s future – if the child wants to leave school at age 12 to take a job, you say no, you must stay at school, you must get your matric, and so on. If your health is not in good shape you are not going to be a useful member of society. And if your personal development, your manners, your confidence in being able to talk, to ask questions – all the soft skills – get lost, you won’t be able to function well as an adult. We concentrate on all the issues around the younger child: trying to help the mothers stop drinking, make sure the child gets food, goes to school, etc.
We work with children on 32 farms in this area. We have a “lammevanger”, someone who goes around making sure that all these children are going to school, and that the babies that are at risk are brought in to the baby unit we have here on the farm, where they are fed and looked after. After that we have a programme that consists of 17 different projects all the way through up to the early 20s. It’s an expensive programme that lasts for 25 years. What are the ingredients that let it last that long without losing its vitality and its stamina?

First, you’ve got to be self-sustainable – no government department or donor or development agency is going to fund you for that long. On this farm we grow 35 hectares of olives; the IDC has been very generous in supporting our olive factory and that has become one of our income streams. Pick ‘n Pay have adopted us – they are genuinely anxious to provide support for programmes like ours, and there is also self-interest involved in terms of ticking boxes on the BEE scorecard. Our products are sold in 350 of their shops around the country. We’ve signed a contract with Woolworths to do private labelling and we are going into 9 different outlets with them from September and October this year. So we have outlets for our produce, and the income it generates can go into the POP programme.

I find it odd that funders don’t ask the question: what is your plan for when I disappear? Funders should help the projects they fund to become self-sustainable, and to plan for this from the first funding proposal onwards.

We’ve got to produce a group of rural people who want to stay in the rural areas, and have good skills and the confidence to feel that they can do a range of different things rather than just the one skill that they have been taught – if they can’t get a job as a bricklayer they can think about how to make bricks, or sell bricks, or open a hardware shop.

Next to our preschool we have a leadership college; we will be taking the best of young people from the 18 surrounding villages where we work who can’t get jobs to teach them leadership skills, so that they come out of the programme able to ask the right questions about how things are happening around them, and make a difference to the community where they live.

Mikal Lambert will be working with these leadership college graduates on a permaculture programme. This is an important part of working towards keeping young people in the villages to enrich these communities, rather than drifting off into the squatter settlements around the big towns and cities.
PERMACULTURE PROJECT, GOEDGEDACHT

Mikal Lambert

I’m a permaculture designer – but since this term is not always easy for people to make sense of, I prefer to say I work in small-scale agriculture, CA. Some of the work we are doing has already been talked about in this action-dialogue. People have expressed concern about farmers being an older generation, but I have contact with young people who are eager to become farmers. From my perspective, the experts here at this high-level discussion of food security are all very ‘senior’, whereas I want younger people to lead me towards solutions to food security, because they will do things very differently in the future from the methods that have been described in the presentations.

Here at Goedgedacht we have a 1-hectare piece of land where we are doing permaculture farming. This isn’t going to solve all the food security problems people face, but it can be one plate of food among many. We need to get back to a food-centric society. How do we make it cool for young people to want to work on farms? There are so many cognitive barriers they have to get through. And we know that they want to do the easy work, rather than digging trenches with a spade. Our project is looking to stimulate the young people here to become excited by farming and to lead us in future farming activities.

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Peter Templeton added a coda to Mikal Lambert’s presentation. He referred the gathering to a recent report produced by the South African Institute of Race Relations on youth in South Africa which posed the question ‘are we moving towards the perfect storm?’ and called for everyone present at the action-dialogue to take seriously the need to respond to the situation in which the youth find themselves: there is 46% unemployment amongst people aged 20–24 years old. He argued that the time has come for practitioners, researchers and government policy makers alike to make the youth the core of what they focus on in their work.
The discussion that concluded Day 1 ranged across all the presentations given during the course of the day. Francois Lategan began by drawing attention to the fact that in all the presentations, speakers keep on coming back to the interface between science and society: we’re trying to get the science applied, but it’s important that we recognise that it’s about the social, and the interface where these two meet – this is where we are active.

Francois Lategan: A question for Hendrik – looking at the way that CA is being dealt with at policy level, at universities and in other higher education institutions, and in programmes, what are the most important bottlenecks that CA is experiencing, and what are the critical issues that need to be focused on at the interface of science and society?

Hendrik Smith: The critical issue is recognising that there is a system that can serve as that bridge between science and society – in other words, knowledge and implementation of innovation systems. A second issue is lack of capacity in both innovation systems and CA. If we want to scale it up we need to do something about developing more capacity through training in innovation systems, at all levels from farmer to tertiary education level; if we want extension officers to be part of this they need to be retrained in new skills, and in facilitation of this innovation process. There are also policy problems; we’ve just got the funds to work on a CA policy. Our action-workshop yesterday to integrate CA with LandCare was very successful – this is a first step in that direction.

Rauri Alcock: If we want to get policy makers into that mind-set, the thing to do is to take senior agriculture officials to the farms where it is working very successfully and say to them, if you’re going to help people with tractors they must only use the tractors with the right sort of CA ploughs attached. When government buys ploughs for people, suppliers should not sell them the old ploughs, only the ones that are suitable for CA. These are simple and direct ways to scale out the CA approach.

HS: Yes, government capital investment programmes for mechanisation are a perfect vehicle for this, but then if there isn’t capacity to use the new equipment they will say it has failed and stop funding it.

Ben Cousins: Rauri’s example is a very good one of how a simple change in policy could dramatically affect the whole environment. But Hendrik’s example of lack of capacity is very telling, and it connects to what Peter Templeton was saying, because facilitation skills are soft skills. Government needs to become a ‘deliberate learner’ – we need to create learning capacity in these institutions. The big policy question is how we get this change at a large scale.

“We aren’t rich enough as a country to employ consultants everywhere that a programme must be implemented; and it’s been shown all over the world that this approach doesn’t work. You can’t consult the government out of its job.”
A question for Peter – how can you facilitate large-scale systemic change in personal development and parental skills based on your small-scale experience? How can your programme lead to changes in the health system, the education system etc. at a national level?

Peter Templeton: To work elsewhere, beyond this farm, we need to be self-sustainable. We need to plant more olives – we got a government minister who admires our work to buy us the farm next door. The IDC is also offering to help us. The big renewable power companies are coming towards us to meet their social responsibility requirements (1.4% of their gross turnover has to be used for social development projects). This is rural funding that will go into villages and rural towns. We are very concerned about rolling out. We have developed container ‘Starter POPs’ that will be set up in small villages without electricity, making available a form of education through digital connectivity and internet resources that has never been in the rural areas before. The Department of Rural Development knows this and has already been doing a lot of work in this area.

BC: Your role is to challenge the way the government operates – you will never become the alternative Department of Education. This must be the way we challenge and change the big systems – by showing them alternative ways of doing things.

PT: These Starter PoP centres have got a contribution to make to children throughout the rural areas, by showing a way of surrogate parenting for children whose own parents can’t do this for them. We want government to ‘steal the idea’ and take it to scale.

FL: This reiterates the importance of tapping into social learning processes. Something we saw in the presentations was the relationship between social construct and innovation platforms. The platform and the typology of social learning systems still remain a question – we are still saying that suitability of the platform is an issue.

Rauri Alcock: We can’t in this workshop accept that the consultancy model is the answer to scaling up. We aren’t rich enough as a country to employ consultants everywhere that a programme must be implemented; and it’s been shown all over the world that this approach doesn’t work. You can’t consult the government out of its job.

FL: The US land grant system was one of the most advanced and effective systems. They had a declaration on agriculture: this meant that agriculture was removed from being dealt with in a ‘comme ci comme ça’ manner – one year we do it this way, the next year we do it a different way. There was a declaration which was identified as the platform for agriculture, and that was it. We are faced with many of the issues we have raised today because there is no clear statement on where government stands in regard to agriculture.”
I have been a successful dairy farmer in the Eastern Cape, and at a certain point I felt strongly that I should start ‘giving back’ to less fortunate communities, doing what I call ‘national service’ – and for me this has meant resurrecting irrigation schemes in the former Ciskei, something I have been doing for the past 10 years through Amadlelo Agri and the Fort Hare Dairy Trust.

The couple shown in the photograph on this page epitomise what Amadlelo is doing: the man in the photograph was brought back from Johannesburg to the Eastern Cape as a young man, set down in the middle of a field and told ‘this is your dairy farm’. We taught him the necessary skills, helped him to set up an irrigation system and other infrastructure and now he is a successful dairy farmer.

In the early 2000s I challenged the white commercial farmers and business people with whom I’d been working as a consultant for 30–40 years not to sit back and wait for transformation to happen in the area where we lived and farmed – the former Transkei – but to actively do something about it. We had a few strategy sessions, and Amadlelo was born out of that process. There were about 70 commercial farmers at that time who said they would contribute monthly to this company, and we would get it off the ground. I was given the role of setting the actual dairy farming in motion.

Thanks to Professor Raats at Fort Hare University, we started the farming operation in the area around the university so that we could have a training centre there for black dairy farmers.

Amadlelo set out to transform, but my view at the time was that taking a white farm and turning it into a black farm doesn’t do anything for transformation – it might lead to some appeasement in terms of our painful history, but it won’t bring any benefits for our children in the future. What we decided to do was to venture where no one else was going – to transform by creating opportunities for young black people to become dairy managers, dairy farm owners, and in the process create new jobs, not just change the people in existing jobs. We wanted them to be successful farmers, not just farmers because they had been put on the land as a form of ‘transformation’. Politically we always want to see success within 24 hours; but we knew that it takes up to 10 years to be a successful farmer, and we tried to put a model together that would guarantee the success of the project and the people. We
want to create vibrant communities that are also empowered communities – and I
sometimes wonder whether what we are doing does empower communities. So our vision
can be summarised as “Creating Profitable Sustainable Black Empowered Agri Business”. All
these elements had to be present, or else we would not have succeeded.

Some of the problems that we wrestle with in terms of the small farmer, and the dilemmas
that we deal with in the area where we operate can be summarised in the phrase “Pride
Prejudice and Heartache” – these are things that mess up our country and our thinking.

- I want to reintroduce national service to our country, rather than nationalisation – by
  which I mean that those of us that have the capability, the privilege, the experience have
to do national service, leave our comfort zone and make a difference. As people of
privilege in this country, we need to be of service – this is an ethic that we’ve lost in our
lives. We asked these farmers to put their money where their mouths were; they have
put R27 million into Amadlelo, farmers give of their time and effort to take students, the
ones who want to work rather than just get a BMW and a BlackBerry, to become dairy
farmers.

- Instead of trade unions we should create employment unions; where I come from an
  employed person is an elite person, not a downtrodden worker – he can bring home
money to his family every day. I come from a province with 102% unemployment –
that’s uppermost in my heart.

- We need to address the issues and then perfect the models. We are very good at
having conferences on models – there are people who always want to criticise the
models that are being used; but these models, whatever they are, are giving people an
income. If it works stop fiddling with it; and instead of criticising do something of your
own.

- Another big heartache is that there is no funding mechanism for black farmers in this
country, and yet we talk about transformation. There’s no way to get a black farmer up
and running. For the Land Bank he’s either too big or too poor – he falls in the middle of
a policy vacuum. He can’t get subsidised funding, or normal funding; the banks won’t
take his television set or other household goods as reasonable collateral to buy a dairy
farm. Policy makers need to take note of this and do something about it.

- Many people where I come from are not farmers, yet they own a plot; on one of the
irrigation schemes where I work, the plot owners are people who live in Cape Town.
And there are really good farmers who don’t own the land, don’t know if they’ll own it
tomorrow, don’t know if the real owner will come back and they’ll be moved off it. We
need to allow real farmers to have access to land.

“Politically we always want to see
success within 24 hours; but we
knew that it takes up to ten years to
be a successful farmer...”
Another issue in South Africa that really worries me is that we have incredible capability, but we can’t get all the capable people – white commercial farmers, government, business people, academics – to come together to solve the problems of the country, because of lack of leadership, because of pride, prejudice or some other stupid thing. Where are all the leaders? Why don’t they actually lead the country, instead of pontificating about whether they are small farmers or black farmers or whatever type of farmer? They are farmers, and they want to farm. Why don’t our policy and our support systems support these people to do so? There are supposedly all these programmes to help farmers but the people I work with cannot see them, and for us they are just not there.

Another question is: When do we apply the rules and laws of our country to make sure that the resources of the country are not misused, in the widest sense? The former Transkei has the ability to feed South Africa. But if we allow the land to degrade (as in the photographs below of two places just 50 km apart in the Transkei), we will wake up one day and wonder where our resources have gone.

Google Earth images of farms in the Zanyokwe irrigation scheme show plots where farmers who don’t own the plots, working with old irrigation systems, were able to produce at the same level as high-powered irrigation systems. We have people with mega ability out there, but we also have to deal with lots of historical mistrust between communities where we work; in some areas there are plots where nothing is happening while neighbouring farmers are using gravity irrigation that the government put in at considerable expense to farm their plots successfully – this is a national asset going to waste. Farmers also have problems with those who strip their fencing, who do not sow but do reap.

“. . .there is no funding mechanism for black farmers in this country, and yet we talk about transformation. There’s no way to get a black farmer up and running. For the Land Bank he’s either too big or too poor – he falls in the middle of a policy vacuum. “
There are places where myriad plots are being farmed, while next door no plots are being farmed – it’s not clear why that should be. On some land around Fort Hare there is a land claim pending, which means we can’t work the land; this a great frustration for us.

I’m trying to encourage spillover from the farms into the surrounding area, so that we can be seen to be doing things for the broader community. We need to double the size of the Eastern Cape economy – we have 51% of people unemployed. We have a serious problem, especially with youth unemployment, with a minute tax base – three out of a hundred people pay tax. We approached McCain’s to use the land for a factory for farmed vegetables from our 13 000 hectares of irrigated land – they said no thanks, the Chinese can supply us with frozen vegetables more cheaply than you can. In 1998 there were 7 400 dairy farmers in South Africa; in 2014 there are fewer than 1 990. This is the stark reality of the environment that young black people, and the smallholder farmers, are coming into – the market isn’t there because we can’t compete against the world. Where the farmer finds himself now is that everything he tries doesn’t work. We could have spent the money that has been used to buy white-owned land on development:390 000 hectares of irrigation employing 234 000 people. We need to refocus our energy on providing jobs for young people in the farming sector.

What we are doing with young black people is immersing them in a culture that they did not have, immersing them in everything we know to make them into top-class dairy farmers – from personal wealth creation through the whole spectrum of knowledge and skills that privileged people have. We put these young people together with the top commercial farmers so that they understand what it takes to get things done. We believe that you can’t take small farmers into successful commercialisation if you keep them stuck within a category such as ‘small-scale farming’ – or classified within categories where they don’t qualify for funding.

As far as extension services are concerned, we have to have an extension service in South Africa that has places like the University of Fort Hare, and people like our experienced dairy farmers in the project, to fall back on, consultants (black or white, local or foreign) who have experience of dairy farming.

The outcomes of the project can be summarised as follows:

- Experienced successful black dairy farm managers and owners are integrated with other commercial dairy farmers.
- We are capacitating communities as trustees, directors and shareholders.
- We are creating a multi-disciplinary support structure.
There is milking of 6,000 cows where nothing was happening before.
514 people are employed earning R16m in wages annually.
We have increased Eastern Cape processing capacity by 450,000 litres per day.
We are influencing and supporting government to attain a true rainbow nation.
Much work has been done with SMMEs in terms of milk sales, maize grain and maize silage.
We offer a return to landowners who are not farmers.
The project is creating an opportunity for small farmers to move up.

**POST-PRESENTATION DISCUSSION**

*Wim van Averbeke:* Is it correct that the cost of 1 hectare of irrigation is R200,000?

*Jeff Every:* Yes.

*WvA:* What sort of infrastructure is behind that cost?

*JE:* We develop a hectare of irrigation for R30–50,000, but if you’re going to dairy farm it the figure goes up. There must be many other kinds of marketing and export infrastructure behind the farming, to sell the amount of milk produced — within the region itself people already get the milk and the fresh produce that they need from other small-scale sources. Up to 80% of the milk we produce gets exported out of the Eastern Cape into South Africa, but South Africa is saturated — we need to export elsewhere in Africa and the world. And the same is true of whatever else we produce. You can’t develop 13,000 hectares, get it back to full production, and think you’re going to sell the produce in South Africa.

*Ben Cousins:* It seems the cost per job created is R318,000 — is that correct?

*JE:* Yes, and it’s not good. But we tend to get fixated on the cost of the job, to the detriment of the fact that we actually created the job. And the knock-on effect of each job is massive — we have a massive amount of SMMEs that are feeding off that system. We’ve got up to 2,000 people that are benefitting financially other than through the salary cheque that gets paid by the project. We also pay nominal rentals to landowners who aren’t living on their plots. And we need to look at this in terms of making use of a national asset that would otherwise just be lying there unused. Dairy farming is not the most cost-effective way to create jobs in South Africa but it’s what I can do as a dairy farmer. Other commodity groups (e.g. the NGWA) can do their own version of this.
The Nguni Cattle Development Project is a partnership between rural communities and the University of Fort Hare, the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) and the Eastern Cape Department of Rural Development and Agrarian Reform. Government is involved in its capacity as the custodian of agrarian development. The university is there because of its strong research capacity; and some master’s and doctoral graduates of the university have based their research work in the project. The IDC has funded the project.

We work on the basis of the concept of ‘Passing on the Gift’: a community is loaned 30 pregnant heifers and 2 bulls to keep for a 5-year period, after which it should return the same number, gender and condition of cattle from the progeny of the initial herd to the Trust. The Trust then lends the returned cattle to another participant community. This is monitored by the Trust, not the community that has been given the original herd; the Trust decides which cattle are to be returned from the original herd’s progeny.

Why do we work with Nguni cattle? These are some of the characteristics of this breed that make it suitable from our perspective:
- early maturity
- fertility
- adaptability
- high tolerance to tick-borne diseases
- low input costs (important, because we are dealing with poor farmers)
- beautiful and marketable hides.

The objectives of the project are:
- to establish Nguni cattle herds in rural communal areas;
- to improve the bloodstock of the participating communities by introducing and distributing Nguni bloodstock;
- promotion of systematic grazing;
- promotion of participatory development;
- development of skills and capacities necessary to establish commercial livestock farmers;
- affirmative steps to eradicate venereal diseases from the herds of the targeted rural communal areas;
- to establish a niche and recognized “grass-fed Nguni beef” market (which is a challenge).

“It is not true that all farmers want to move from subsistence to smallholder to commercial . . . some of them are happy with their small gardens, as subsistence farmers – some have even moved back to subsistence farming after having farmed large plots in the past. Policy makers and academics will always be confused by this mobility of farmer behaviour . . .”
In terms of our requirements, any community that wants to participate in the project must first castrate all non-Nguni bulls in community herds. We don’t invite communities into the project, it is they who apply to participate, so they know the requirement to castrate the bulls – even bulls of other breeds belonging to individual farmers in the community who do not want to be part of the project. And of course we have to deal with the social dynamics that arise from this.

Milestones we have reached thus far:
- 78 Nguni herds have been established to date.
- 876 (73 communities x 10 heifers + 2 bulls) and 160 (5 communities x 30 heifers + 2 bulls) distributed to date.
- About 80% of calves in participating communities are Nguni crosses.
- Practical field training is conducted.
- Participants manage the herds on their own.
- Like other markets, the beef market is volume-driven. We have not yet started with marketing for grass-fed Nguni beef because we first need to achieve sufficient numbers to reach the volumes required by the market.

We have a technical committee, together with the department, including animal scientists, pastoral scientists etc. who can give advice on how to improve the herds.

Challenges we face:
- Poor or insufficient infrastructure in villages (lack of planned villages).
- Inadequate integration of the project with relevant government programmes dealing with infrastructure development, inputs and so on.
- Lack of participation by women and young people. With women it is not about a refusal to participate, but a matter of tradition, according to which women are not supposed to have anything to do with cattle herding or any contact with them in the kraals.
- Age group of participants: the young people are a mobile group. They participate in projects, but as soon as they hear about a job in the urban areas they just leave. Now the participants in the projects are mainly old people, and some of them have already died.
- Inadequate resources for further development.

Developments we are planning:
- The next commercialisation phase of the project has been approved by the IDC.
- Further development of breeding stocks is to be implemented in the old projects.
- Resources availability is a major criterion for commercialisation – we cannot develop all of the communities we work with in this direction. For example, there has to be

“With women it is not about a refusal to participate, but a matter of tradition, according to which women are not supposed to have anything to do with cattle herding or any contact with them in the kraals.”
adequate fencing. Availability of land is also an important consideration.

- Commitment and vision are also key criteria for selection to be developed.
- The Trust will continue establishing new projects with cattle procured by the DRDAR, while commercialising the existing projects.

Which farmers are we working with? The reality is that we work with the bottom group of farmers – those who move from one type of farming to another all the time depending on what livelihood opportunities are available.

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<th>Subsistence → Smallholder → Commercial</th>
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It is not true that all farmers want to move from subsistence to smallholder to commercial, as the top row of the diagram above shows; some of them are happy with their small gardens, as subsistence farmers – some have even moved back to subsistence farming after having farmed large plots in the past. Policy makers and academics will always be confused by this mobility of farmer behaviour, as shown in the bottom row of the diagram.

**Policy development that can strengthen the work of the project**

- The academy should develop market-responsive curriculum policies.
- Government should:
  - implement the many policies that already exist;
  - undertake broader consultation on policy development process.
- Development agencies should never miss an opportunity to influence the direction of policy.

Policies relevant to the Nguni Cattle Development Project include:

- Land tenure
- Land reform
- Preferential procurement
- Youth development

There are so many policies that can influence the project, because it is based in communities and anything that affects the community will affect the project. For example, we know that on certain dates we can’t go to communities because those are ‘grant dates’.

“There are so many policies that can influence the project, because it is based in communities and anything that affects the community will affect the project.”
The photo alongside is of the bull Ngqele, named for the village of Ngqele (gifted bulls are always named after the village to which they are given).

He was gifted to the village, and then disappeared. Looking at the culture of the area, it’s likely that he was slaughtered during a circumcision period, since in that area people slaughter bulls with horns at that time. Now we know never to send a bull into that area during the circumcision period. This is an example of how our work is affected by the culture and traditions of the area.

**Post-Presentation Discussion**

_Wim van Averbeke_: To what extent do people see the cattle in a certain way, based on traditional cultural values, as opposed to seeing it as a commodity that can make money. What are the advantages of Nguni meat as a product, is it better than average beef products?

_Vuyani Somyo_: As far as dealing with traditional issues is concerned – we are returning cattle that were known to belong to the black people; but given the challenges of poverty, you have to commercialise and this has meant treating cattle as commodities – for example advising farmers not to give them names, because they have to sell them. We are trying to make sure that people are able to farm to sell, like commercial farmers. But we mustn’t lose sight of the fact that the cattle are used for traditional ceremonies, some of these cattle must come from the household’s own kraal, not be bought in.

The University of Fort Hare, together with Stellenbosch University and the University of the Free State, has done research on the value of Nguni meat – it is low in cholesterol, and very tender. We are mindful of these findings and will use them when we draw up a marketing strategy for the meat.
Mngcubune Livestock Development

Lyle Kew

The history and vision of Mngcubune

In 1980 I started working on a farm-based youth development programme with Stanley Etkins, bringing youth down from Soweto to expose them to agriculture. In those days, in the bad education system that existed, kids who were naughty got sent to the garden to dig as a punishment – it was seen as dirty, bad work. We brought youth down to stay in dormitories on the farm, and to see the advantage of agriculture as something they could get involved in, in future years. Mngcubune has evolved from that programme into its present form as a livestock development project. Its vision is to try to see an integrated middle class agriculture in the country, not split in terms of class and colour as in the past. Its mission is to get production going – to get people using the land properly, not being given land because it’s a status symbol, or a football pitch, a place to go and play on. This applies not only to black people but across the board – to mining houses, foreigners – anyone who owns land that is being played on instead of being put to use.

Most households in communal areas have livestock and access to grazing – should the optimisation of these existing assets not be prioritised? Why are we trying to reinvent the wheel? People want to farm – it’s cultural, it’s got historical roots, and yet we put up tunnels that blow away, we put up huge infrastructure that nobody wants, it’s not even put where the farmers can use it. If you drive between Maclear and Mount Fletcher, there are tunnels put up by the government stretching halfway up the mountain – they’ve been completely blown away. Water has to be pushed up a river to reach them – think of the Eskom bill, the wear-and-tear on the pipes. It’s an absurdity.

Why does Mngcunube focus on livestock?

It’s not all we do, we also do homestead food security – we’ve had an impact on huge areas of Lesotho where there is no food at all; but in this action-dialogue my focus is on livestock.

- The livestock is already in place, but producing sub-optimally. Our goal is to make sure that farmers optimise what is already there.
- We introduce a cost-effective method of livestock development using a database that we run of everything we do, every aspect of our activities. The European Union (EU) insisted that we do an external evaluation for a programme we did that they funded in
“The most critical thing I’ve learned in 24 years of working with farmers in South Africa and the whole of sub-Saharan Africa is that when you work with a group . . . while the facilitator is there, it runs like a clock. Pull the facilitator out, and 2–3 weeks later it’s gone.”

the Eastern Cape, and the Free State University evaluation said that our results were 50% understated, because we didn’t use water at all in the course of lowering mortalities and increasing the lambing rate.

- **We aim to positively shift rural economies to alleviate poverty.**
- **We facilitate the understanding of correct land use.** People will criticise what I’m saying because we focus on helping farmers to improve their livestock – but what about the land? My response is that you can’t stop helping people to farm livestock in order to focus on the land – the issue around that is whose business is it to do that? We can’t stop helping farmers because of the gaps in the law, or the lack of teeth of laws like the National Environmental Management Act; this is one of the best Acts in the world in relation to environmental management, but you can ignore it, do what you like on the land, and nothing happens to stop you.
- **We equip farmers to start on the road to commercial farming should they want to.** If you can’t start in the communal areas, using commonage outside the town, with your two ewes or one cow, where do you start, if you want to develop as a farmer? We have to nurture people in the communal areas or on the farms around the town, and start from there. But the system of commonage management is not easy – the whole organisational development aspect of it is there, people need to be organised to manage it themselves. The government gave us a project in the northern Free State, 162 land reform farms and the commonages around them and around the town where none of the farm were bankable; within 18 months all but 4 of the farms were bankable, we had them on the Pastel accounting system, and the farmers were going for it.

**What do we do?**

- We facilitate the **improvement and increase of existing assets** including land use. We try and encourage people to understand that you can’t put 1 000 head of cattle on 100 hectares; but it’s a difficult thing to get people to accept.
- We provide ongoing support to **voluntary individual** farmers. The most critical thing I’ve learned in 24 years of working with farmers in South Africa and the whole of sub-Saharan Africa is that when you work with a group – and we work with lots of really good groups and projects – while the facilitator is there, it runs like a clock. Pull the facilitator out, and 2–3 weeks later it’s gone. Why? Not everyone pulls their weight equally, but everyone expects to get paid out at the end of the month – that’s where the conflict begins. If you work with individual farmers then each farmer wants to be there to farm, not because of an expectation that “maybe there’s money in this, I can sit doing nothing and still get paid”. In our programmes each person must work for everything
they earn.

- We encourage **group input** buying and selling (economies of scale). We’ve developed a proposal together with Moshe Swartz of the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform whereby the farmers buy together, produce alone and sell together. That way farmers can buy and sell like products at best price. We also have a secondary and tertiary process in the proposal relating to selling of produce. We’ve increased the sales from virtually nothing into the commercial side of the market – there are diverse markets, the cultural market, the funeral market, the family eating market – and the main formal markets where farmers deal with abattoirs, shops etc. These are all different markets with different pricing structures. When someone wants a Nguni with a white side and a brown back because his ancestors want that one, he will pay anything for it. But then other farmers think they can get the same price for their own inferior cattle sold to market – these are all issues we need to deal with.

- We focus on **livestock**.
- We link rural agricultural producers to **formal markets**.
- We **partner** with tribal authority, local, provincial, national governments in designing and implementing projects.
- We carefully **monitor** the performance of projects. That’s where our database comes in – we monitor every cent spent from petty cash upwards; every animal died, born, eaten, sold – everything is recorded in every project that we do. Our databases have been evaluated and accepted by various universities.

**How do we do it?**

- There is full stakeholder **consultation** – that is a given.
- We offer animal husbandry and eco management (in context), **skills development** at least on a monthly cycle.
- We offer access to correct vet **medicines** and supplementary **stock feeds** to the farmer in appropriate quantities and price. You can’t expect a farmer with three ewes and a cow to go to the co-op and buy a bottle of medicine costing R1 000. We have a village cycle of visits by our mentors, up to 20 visits per month – when the mentor goes to the village he can provide the service, train the farmer in observing his flock to see what is happening to them and why, what the options are etc. The farmer chooses the option he wants, and then pays for it – there is nothing for nothing. We buy millions of doses every month and pass on the subsidy to the farmer, because there has to be a margin for the second phase, the sustainability phase, where local people are trained to take over when we leave.

“The farmer chooses the option he wants, and then pays for it – there is nothing for nothing.”
We offer the farmers access to better genetic stock at appropriate prices. Our farmers form direct relationships with the farmers from whom they buy this stock – animals that may have a small flaw on the surface and therefore don’t get sold at top prices into the main commercial market, but won’t affect the quality of the bloodline.

We offer access to marketing opportunities. This is a challenging aspect of the work we do, because the wealth of a rural farmer lies in how many animals he has, not in the quality – but we don’t want poor quality animals using up the land with no return in terms of market value.

We offer ongoing training in all the above through mentorship and exposure.

We develop local capacity for sustainability, through Village Link Persons – VLPs. This is the crucial element of Phase 2 of our programme. We have mentors who go around the villages – 20 villages in 20 days. In that 20-village complex, someone has to take over from the mentor. It takes about 18 months to train a VLP to do this – to provide all the training and support that the mentor originally provided: access to inputs, market information etc.

We ensure VLPs are thoroughly trained before we rollout or leave. We have one person who goes around to all the projects and keeps the VLPs up to date with latest technologies, pharmaceutical information, feed company updates etc.

**Elundini Project: an example of our work**

The Elundini Project was implemented in Elundini Municipality in the Eastern Cape. It was funded by Ukhahlamba District Municipality, SibanyeGold and the EU (Thina Sinako). Elundini is one of poorest areas in South Africa, with poor infrastructure and access, very bad roads etc. Livestock is primary asset of households in the area. Farmers want vet services but are unable to access them, and they want animal husbandry skills.

**Development opportunities in Elundini:**

- The determined need was sustainable animal husbandry, access to inputs and skills development.
- Farmers had the will to develop themselves and their livestock management skills.
- Farmers needed to improve livestock quality.
- Farmers needed to be encouraged to market dry stock.
- The area needed local service providers – i.e. VLPs, not big projects; VLPs are the people who stay behind when big projects leave.
- There was a need to strengthen long-term service provision from government to the farmers through advocacy. Government extension officers think that projects coming into
an area are taking away their jobs. When we go into an area we ask the extension officers how we should present our proposals so that we can support what they want to do in the area – in this way we bring them on board and they push to implement our programme.

- There was a need to create and strengthen value chain linkages.

**Gaps and weaknesses in the Elundini Project:**

- Government provides livestock parasite treatments once per annum. That’s all they have a budget for – and if you do this once a year you might as well not do it at all, it has to be done in cycles, for example a four-week cycle.
- Government cannot provide a regular free service for budgetary reasons.
- Government cannot serve as a wholesaler or retailer. In our context government should watch over the quality and standards of what project/programme facilitators in an area do, not try to do the stock trading themselves.
- Animal health problems are thus not fully controlled.
- Mortality (20% adults and 50% lambs) would not change because there wasn’t an adequate treatment programme.
- There are no fences or official stock count controls so there is overgrazing.
- The Elundini communal areas livestock industry is challenged.
- Every project cannot be all things to all people and things, least of all this one.

**Basic operations of the project:**

- We introduce the project to stakeholders, and explain that it is voluntary, there are no fees, the role of mentors, routines, and pricing methods.
- If enough farmers are interested then a cycle of monthly village visits starts, with a mentor present in the area every day.
- At each visit farmers bring some or all of their stock for treatments as discussed and agreed on, and payment is made.
- The mentors sensitise farmers to the need for marketing and environmental care.
- Orders for rams, supplies of fodder etc. are handled at the same time.
- In the process detailed information is collected on a per farmer basis for use in the project database and the petty cash accounting system. (If you don’t measure, you can’t manage.) All visits are recorded in the database, together with details about animals treated, sold, eaten, monies paid etc. We have details of the progress of every farmer who has worked with us there since 2002.
- Medicines, feeds and genetics are paid for.

“Government cannot serve as a wholesaler or retailer. In our context government should watch over the quality and standards of what project/programme facilitators in an area do, not try to do the stock trading themselves.”
Phase One: Main factors influencing the results

- Putting the farmer first
- Mentoring approach – this is only one of the possible approaches. It’s not without problems, but for us it works. The best mentors are people who want to give, to “do their national service” – it takes time to learn to identify suitable mentors.
- Access to inputs
- Sustainability depends on:
  - the presence of good VLPs
  - sticking to a policy of “No mahala” – farmers pay for what they receive from us.
  - environmental awareness

Results

- The results shown in the graphs below are taken from our database. The database has been verified and published by the University of the Free State on behalf of the EU (Elundini Livestock Project Evaluation, A Jordaan & D Sissons, UFS).
The flat curve of the mortality rate graph is an indication that there was a big initial impact on mortality when the project started, followed by a sustained low mortality rate.

**Phase Two: Sustainability**

Village Link Persons:
- VLPs provide medicines, inputs and advice to farmers after the project ends.
- Their selection, training over 18 months and size of their client base are crucial.
- The VLP makes an income from selling inputs at a small mark-up (this is now their own SMME – they can grow as big as they like with it).
- They supply services and inputs on site in the right quantities and at the right price.

The “No mahala” (nothing for free) policy:
- It’s unreasonable in the long term to supply livestock owners with free basic vet products ad infinitum. So users must pay.
- Paying instils ownership and restores pride.
- This also ensures that VLPs can run a small business from selling, ensuring sustainability.
• It also creates an obligation to ensure that the most cost-effective supply arrangement is made so that farmers are not exploited.

VLP outcomes to date
• There have been no negative VLP results so far.
• VLPs service approximately 79 000 small stock units (ssu) per month.
• This amounts to on average R56 454 – i.e. R5 645 per VLP per month on average.
• VLPs are not limited to their initial areas of operation.
• Farmers are evidently happy with VLP service as they are “voting with their pockets”.
• The Eastern Cape Department of Agricultural Livestock Development has acknowledged and supports the approach.

A graph of VLP profit and SSU in Elundini is shown below.

From the graph it is clear that there has been a profound economic injection into a poor rural economy through the project; the estimated income to Elundini Local Municipality area over the period was R50 million.
Constraints and challenges

- The initial resistance by the Department of Agriculture to what was perceived as the threat of “taking over of their functions/jobs”. The benefits exceeded the threat very soon.
- The silo approach of development stakeholders.
- Marketing challenges (funeral, cultural, household and open markets).
- Problems with the Fencing Act (this is a policy issue) – if you can’t fence, you can’t manage.
- Application of the NEMA (the Carrying Capacity restrictions need to be based on an understanding of the rural context).
- Difficulty in accessing government funding to support communal farmers (a policy issue).
- Government should manage the administration of implementation.
- The National Department of Agriculture has a mentorship policy there to be used.
- Government needs to make internships possible, providing opportunities for learner farmers and experience for graduates. You can’t teach anyone anything unless you yourself have walked the farm, and don’t know where your next cent is coming from to buy food for your family. People coming out of universities don’t stand a chance of teaching farmers anything unless they have lived the experience themselves. That is a critical issue government needs to look at. In the old days farmers learned by going to work for another farmer and then taking that knowledge and experience home with them.

Best practice and lessons learned

- Selection of the mentors and VLPs is critical to the success of a project.
- Time and care must be taken in the VLP training and mentoring process.
- VLPs, like farmers, learn best by doing over an extended period – not out of a book.
- Farmers accept VLPs if they have been trained by the mentor in situ.
- Farmers will reduce dry stock for productive stock if there is good reason to do so.
- Participating farmers will listen to reason about changing their practices out of concern for the environment – but change takes time…
- There must be concerted commitment to the proven principles and standards of mentor and VLP development. The standards are there, they have been publicised, no one needs to guess what they are.
- There must be strict management of the whole process from beginning to end.
- A robust database must be maintained: if you can’t measure you can’t manage.

“If these methods are implemented with commitment, passion and good management, the livelihoods of communal livestock farmers can be dramatically improved.”
Francois Lategan (commenting on the discussions thus far): Our quest for development is a moving target; we need to understand that we will never arrive. We need to develop a momentum that we can be part of so that we can achieve ongoing targets. We need a platform for dialogue in the country, and for taking the dialogues that we have in forums such as this one out to a wider community of interested people. And we need to think about a national database.

Tozamile Lukhalo: A question to Jeff about beneficiation: most of the dairy schemes or projects are community-based, and there will always be social dynamics for those who want to come in to the scheme or resuscitate a process linked to that; and there are farmers who want to benefit the day they see the cow being milked – what is your beneficiation approach? How do you manage the social dynamics of the groups?

Jeff Every: This is a crucial question. Failure in our projects is often linked to this. From a policy perspective, you can’t appoint a service provider for two weeks and he comes, facilitates, then leaves after that – there has to be community management, not facilitation. You have to manage expectations, teach the beneficiaries what farming is all about, and what the project is all about. We’ve asked government and others who come in with funding and projects to make it clear that there will be no dividend at the end of the month – otherwise there are people who just sit passively waiting for the payout.

We’ve had verbal promises of government capacitation of community structures but it doesn’t happen, because it’s not a once-off thing. You have to have a community manager who literally manages the community on an ongoing basis forever, because the dynamics change all the time as people come and go in the community and the project. What we require is government as an independent entity to a) understand the project; b) back you all the way, as a referee, so that the community has an independent person to bounce ideas off. Government must be 100% committed to the project. We seriously need to manage and capacitate the community and its structures – we are dealing with tensions between older people in the project and younger people in the community who don’t have the same understanding of what the project is about...

Wim van Averbeke: Why invest in fencing, why not invest in herding, get a few people looking after the village herd, in the process creating employment opportunities for them?

“We seriously need to manage and capacitate the community and its structures – we are dealing with tensions between older people in the project and younger people in the community who don’t have the same understanding of what the project is about...”
Lyle Kew: Herding is what's going on now, in all the places where we work. The proposal we have in now with Dr Swartz [of the DRDLR] is looking at district-wide herding. The issue is about breeding – how to stop the Brahman bull going into a herd where the farmer doesn’t want it. That’s not something an individual herder can control. The herding issue is relevant; but there’s confusion about who’s in charge of the land – it’s state land, where the chief is supposedly in charge; then the Department of Agriculture gets involved and says no, it doesn’t work like that. There’s a continuous push-pull process going on between different people who call the shots... who can tell individual farmers where to graze, where to fence, if they want to do it differently? This is all part of the issue of community dynamics, and who takes charge if the law has no teeth?

Brigid Letty: On the question of fencing – I’ve been doing work in the Eastern Cape on a project that has been running for a year. They’ve implemented rotational rest for a quarter of the land every year, and the community has received the idea surprisingly well, they have come up with the ideas about which animals to exclude, on which areas, and so on. There is external funding involved, which does raise questions about sustainability; but we can’t assume that there can’t be positive approaches to fencing that do have buy-in from traditional leaders.

Vuyani Somyo: On the question posed earlier about commercialisation of Nguni meat production – in our province people herd cattle for different reasons. One reason is to prevent stock theft; they herd them into kraals to stop them being stolen even if this has to be done mid-afternoon – this compromises quality, it affects the weight of the cattle. Nguni cattle should stay in camps, not kraals, but kraaling is done because of stock theft. Another reason is that people are employed to herd cattle, paid by the owners – a job has been created; people from Lesotho are doing this all over the province. In our project there can be a person who is paid by all the members of the project to herd their cattle. If they stop paying him for whatever reason, the herding stops – it has its own dynamics. It would work if everyone in an area was breeding with a Brahman, then you eliminate the breeding threat. There used to be rangers in the former Ciskei who looked after the camps, managing the animals – why can’t this be brought back?

Rauri Alcock: The presentations so far haven’t indicated how you can translate this into a state policy. They seem to be saying that their projects must do it because you can’t trust government to do so without messing it up. A challenge to all of us is to answer the question: When does it get handed over, become a mainline project of the Department of Agriculture in terms of both money value and thought processes?

Ben Cousins: A few comments – 1) The presentations today and yesterday didn’t present enough hard facts and figures on the economics of their work that allow them to be evaluated...
“Communal area livestock is a different farming system from commercial farming, deeply embedded in social systems and linked to customs and rituals which interfere with pure economic rationality. And yet it also has a real economic rationality of its own. . .”

in terms of costs and benefits.

2) The three presentations on livestock demonstrate the problem – they are part of the problem. The fundamental problem is that commercialisation of communal area livestock has been tried for over 80 years in South Africa, in particular in the Eastern Cape, and across Africa and it has basically never worked. There are powerful reasons for this longstanding failure. In Jeff’s case, there’s an underlying assumption that the project is about agribusiness – that it’s a dairy herd. In Vuyani’s case, there’s an underlying assumption about full-time farmers graduating into commercialisation for niche markets etc – the assumption is that it’s a beef herd.

There’s a normative vision of what people should be doing rather than working from what they are actually doing: a fundamental assumption is that we must get subsistence, communal area farmers into commercial farming, rather than improving what they are actually doing which is mixed-purpose farming. The reality is that these are not single-purpose herds and they never have been (with a few exceptions where the farmers you are working with want to do it purely for commercial reasons – and these farmers should probably be moved onto land reform farms where they can do it commercially). Communal area herds, without fencing, with animals kept for purposes deeply embedded in people’s social lives, are not commercial herds – they are multiple-function herds, with high economic value. The research evidence is that multi-purpose herds outperform single-purpose beef herds in terms of economic value per hectare. This is not true if you take away the ploughing function; but with ploughing and manure use included, it is the case across Africa.

Communal area livestock production is a different farming system from commercial farming, deeply embedded in social systems and linked to customs and rituals that do not involve pure economic rationality. And yet it also has a real economic rationality of its own – cattle for marriage, cattle and goats for rituals, serve real social functions that have very important material dimensions in social life. Unless we take those into account we are going to fail.

My larger point is that while we take account of the spread of livestock, fundamentally our work is based on the idea that there’s only one type of real farming we must get people to do and that’s commercial farming – and that is a big problem because you are going to miss 90% of your target population. What is impressive about the national woolgrowers’ programme which Lyle and his colleagues started is that they are getting very nice increases in productivity and income with flocks on land under communal tenure, without all those accoutrements – the most impressive result presented here was the decrease in mortality. It’s clear from all the presentations that people do want increases in productivity – the question we need to answer is
how to address that issue from within their farming systems, instead of trying get people out of what they are doing into another system that is probably suitable only for a minority, who should be doing it on private land. This to me is the problem with agricultural policy in South Africa – we have deeply embedded normative ideas about what farming really is, and we want to get people into those systems, rather than addressing their problems where they are, and at the same time allowing for their movement from one farming category to another – but not in terms of a normative concept of “graduation”.

FL: One thing that has come out of this action-dialogue, and out of research done, is that agriculture means different things to different people. It seems that agriculture has three important functions in South Africa: 1) economic, commercial activity; 2) a social/cultural activity; 3) the function that is grossly ignored: that of social stabilisation in relation to movement between rural areas and the city – we don’t understand this. Policy tends to favour the commercial option, we do not understand the substitution factor, or how strong it is; in many cases it is considered a failure if substitution takes place, if there is negative selection against an option. A proposal to policy could be to create a forum for dialogue on this issue, for finding common ground that can lead to method being introduced into the madness.

Louise de Klerk: Ben has set the rules for how farmers fit the categories – commercial, tight or loose value chains, etc. We as a forum here today have to define what is economic development. There are two legs for economic development that are necessary – the government leg (power, roads, etc.), and entrepreneurial endeavour, the risk takers and hard workers who come in to use what government has set in place. If these two legs are confused and hybridised, you get a mess. We need to be humble enough to say this is government responsibility, this is entrepreneurial responsibility. Don’t put us in boxes according to an academic framework of what types we are, what your framework says we should do or aren’t capable of doing – the academics need to go softer on us, give us a little leeway.

FL: There is a very important function for academics who clarify frameworks and demystify concepts that are then useful to business and government – we mustn’t forget this. Government should take note of the dynamics among us here – the need for a forum where we can find common ground.

Moshe Swartz: As Vuyani’s diagram showed, we are dealing with a complex environment in which farmers are ever moving between categories as smallholders, subsistence farmers, commercial farmers – and we deal with this within a cultural setting.

JE: The issue for us at grassroots level is far more of a heart issue. For the academics, researching categories of farmers and farming may be important, but for some of us the

“It’s clear from all the presentations that people do want increases in productivity – the question we need to answer is how to address that issue from within their farming systems, instead of trying get people out of what they are doing into another system that is probably suitable only for a minority, who should be doing it on private land.”
desperate reality of unemployment is paramount. From our practitioner perspective whether we fit the model or not is not the issue. And we’re looking at the national resource – land, water, people – that’s out there. We’re trying to work with that, and we can panel beat it as we go along. But we can’t forever theorise about the model while 300 unemployed people stand outside trying to get the 3 jobs available.

BC: I’m full of personal admiration for the work that people are doing. But the real question is, is it going to make a difference? We have 34% unemployment in this country, and agriculture is never going to solve that problem – job numbers in agriculture are actually decreasing. The work you do is admirable, but it’s small potatoes. As academics we are not here to shoot you down; we live in the same country – and we have the equivalent of your job seekers on our doorstep every day in the form of weak students. It’s not that you are wrong in what you do; it’s just that it’s very limited, it can only benefit a tiny proportion of the population that it could benefit, if we adopted the appropriate models. Vuyani’s insight into the continuum of farmer types was valuable, but it was contradicted by everything else he said about aiming to do single-purpose beef farming for the market. Do we understand the logic of moving in certain directions rather than others? The whole purpose of our dialogue is to ask whether we can have impact at scale, whatever we are doing.

JE: In terms of the backwards and forwards movement, we are saying exactly that: we are asking the academics here what they can say to us so that we can go back and scale up what we are doing to create more jobs. We would hope that out of this process we will get something to take back to our practical work so that our dividends can make a difference. Government can’t do this – they don’t have the resources. We are saying that the nation has to do it, and we’re saying to the researchers and academics, come back to us with something feasible because we can’t see what it could be.

FL: This brings us back to my opening point, that we are facing a moving target, and we have to continue this dialogue.

“There are two legs for economic development that are necessary – the government leg (power, roads, etc.), and entrepreneurial endeavour, the risk takers and hard workers who come in to use what government has set in place . . .”
An overview of Msinga and Mdukatshani

In 2009 Msinga was declared the poorest and worst place to grow up in Kwazulu-Natal. It is still a declared poverty node of South Africa in 2013 and 2014. It has annual rainfall of 450mm, and a huge rural population. There is a large Department of Rural Development presence in the area, although they are not doing much.

Mdukatshani is an NGO from Msinga. We do not do consulting work. We work on improving chicken and goat production in rural homes as a food security measure. We work with smallholders straddling the categories “subsistence-oriented smallholders” and “market-oriented smallholders” in Ben Cousins’ Typology B. We focus on women farmers and on the unemployed youth. We work collaboratively with the state at provincial and national levels, as a pilot for their scale-up to bigger levels of implementation. We also work with academic institutions in joint research efforts based on the work we do.

We work on:
- chickens (to be discussed in Gugu Mbatha’s presentation)
- Ngunis
- drylands
- land reform issues
- Traditional Authorities, gender and land.

Why goats?
- Goats are gender neutral – in African societies it’s hard working with cattle as there are many issues relating to women and ownership of cattle, girls working with them, etc. But with goats there are none of these concerns.
- They are easy to sell.
- Goat farming can be very productive.
- Goats are low-maintenance, hardy and drought tolerant.
- They are largely un-commercialised – we don’t have any numbers for goat markets but we know that these markets are large.
Most scientists agree that goats are one of the few ways to achieve the pushing back of bush encroachment.

There are double the numbers of goat owners compared to cattle owners in the Msinga area.

Most farmers, especially women, have assets from welfare payments that they want to save. Women tend to bank the money and then use it to buy goats, because banked money isn't as useful as goats. Welfare money is thus converted into goat ownership.

Goats largely self-herd.

Goats are scalable to peri-urban agriculture – they are everywhere in urban townships.

The downside of goats:

- Goats are unglamorous, compared to cattle...
- Research done is mainly on Boer goats.
- We are competing with illegal farming – in the photograph alongside, the entire field is marijuana.
- And goats eat dagga...

Where are the goats?

- There is a variety of numbers and types of livestock based on vegetation – see the map alongside.
- Chickens are always the largest type of livestock in the 80–90% range.
- The cattle-to-goats split varies a lot – from 21% cattle–15% goats on the Mozambique border to 30% cattle–82% goats in Msinga, i.e. where there is more bush and less grass.
- There is more work to be done on the map shown here, and we are hoping that it can be used to guide extension on a provincial level – to show where extension work should be done in terms of numbers.

Is there capital here?

- According to the Census of 2011, the total number of households in Msinga was 37 724.
- Some 70% of households in Msinga own goats; thus of the 38 000 households the number owning goats is 25 840 and they collectively own approximately 362 793 goats.
- In the same area, it can be estimated that there are approximately 147 896 cattle and 726 180 chickens.
- In terms of cash, with goats valued at R1 000 each, cattle R4 000 and chickens at R50 each, the total livestock value in Msinga is R362 million cattle, R588 million goats, R36 million chickens = R982 million, i.e. almost a billion rands' worth of livestock.
We know that the Department of Agriculture has no idea of these numbers – and you can’t do extension unless you know the numbers. How much medicine do you buy to distribute if you don’t know how many cattle are out there?

We use increased animal health as an entry point into improved productivity, drawing on an international model based on community animal health workers – where you look at the livestock structures that exist around dip tanks, build up dip tank committees etc. and they end up with a very extensive network of livestock associations. There are 1,600 dip tanks in KwaZulu-Natal, each with its own committee. This is a way to establish long-term, representative, self-sustaining community structures to maintain these farmers’ animals into the future. There are nine or ten livestock associations in KwaZulu-Natal.

Another aim of the programme is to create an environment of research and practice to be able to give continuing support to farmers – there is no research out there to help goat farmers. We set up Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs) as micro businesses in all communities to add capacity to state extension and to service farmers’ animal health needs. In particular we want to use this to get young people involved in servicing the livestock of older farmers in the area – there is a 40-year age gap between the farmers and the young people in the area.

**The project and its partners**

The Msinga Goat Programme is a joint programme with the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Rural Development. These partners and others play the following roles in the programme:

- **Department of Rural Development** – seed funding, piloting, IP as way forward
- **Department of Agriculture** – integration of CAHWs into Associations, providing some medicines, research, ensuring best practice, associations, joint products
- **Mdukatsani** – training, implementing the CAHW pilot, research, management support
- **The municipality** – value chain creation and support into the future
- **The livestock association** – community dip tanks
- **Heifer International** – another NGO that is looking at value chains and scaling out
- **Academia** – students researching what we do.

**What we do with goat owners**

We focus on working with women, as they are the ones who are present, and the ones with money – the power dynamics in the area have changed, the men don’t have the money now. The work we do with them covers the following:
• Building up knowledge on goat productivity.
• Developing their record-keeping skills and habits – we know how important this is, but it’s a struggle. We battle to keep track of how many goats are born, die, are sold, etc.
• We do research to support productivity.
• We try to involve the farmers in state extension systems. We don’t believe in a failed state system. We can’t afford to write off the state system, we’re spending too much on it – a million civil servants earn money every day. We have to make it work.
• We work directly with +/− 2 000 farmers.

Our support for farmers includes:
• sharing the costs of experiments;
• supporting livestock volunteers;
• lobbying the state to support farmers;
• piloting interventions to deal with problems – for example the problem of kid mortality. We look for ways to work with farmers in their yards (rather than at research stations) to solve the problem.

A profile of goat farmers:
• Those with flocks of 5–10, usually women owners not selling but using for cultural purposes – subsistence-oriented.
• Those with flocks of 15–25, a mix of men and women owners who are starting to sell but worried about replenishment – market-oriented.
• Those with flocks of 50–100, usually men owners. Once the flocks are this big it leads to herding issues – diseases rise and productivity decreases the larger the flock. These farmers are market-oriented but are not selling in large numbers.

Problems that arise because of this profile:
• The government doesn’t believe that these are farmers, in terms of their understanding of what a farmer looks like.
• Women are not society’s decision makers.
• Their vulnerability extends to stock theft.
• The farmers all start from a low capital base.
• We have no ideas of any numbers anywhere so can’t shape extension services for them.

Profile of rural youth:
• They are often disengaged from rural livelihoods – they don’t want to be part of a rural lifestyle.
• But they have large aspirations.
Most of the youth have an education, and can read labels to ascertain correct dosages of medicine.

Most are unemployed.

Most don't have capital.

But they want money and are interested in creating business opportunities.

They are easy to train, so high attrition is not a huge problem.

The Department of Agriculture Production and Veterinary sections are already over-extended, so even though they don’t like what we are doing in terms of the law, the vets accept that animals can be dosed by the people we train without them having completed a 5-year veterinary course.

Older farmers are reluctant to sleep away from home on training courses, whereas young people are more mobile so can sleep out for training events etc.

**How does learning take place?**

- Mainly during farmers days though experiments or trials.
- Supported by more extensive learning through visits to other areas.
- Through research activities – we have a goat interest group where we bring in researchers, vets, academics, ourselves, and try to co-ordinate research.

**The long-term outlook**

If there is sufficient value in the services CAHWs deliver this should provide momentum for self-paid options to establish themselves. And the cream will rise to the top: we have one CAHW who has gone off on his own, services hundreds of farmers, and the difference is already visible.

Feeding and investing in herds comes with experience and infrastructure and a market – people will only invest if they see that there’s a market. It’s a chicken-and-egg situation to persuade farmers to invest in medicine to prevent the goats from dying; a formal regular auction market is needed to create suck on the system.

We are also talking to young people about growing soya beans and other protein sources to feed the goats over the winter. If we can create small and micro enterprises that can feed back into the system, where farmers spend money on medicine, feed from businesses run by young people in the area, it strengthens the whole economy in the area.

**So what are the problems?**

- 5 million jobs or opportunities to generate wealth have been promised by government.
- The youth are unemployed, disinterested, and need direction and money
There are millions of ‘peasants’, livestock keepers, non-farming farmers – whatever government calls them.

There is state responsibility for extension but this is seen as tilling the soil – government does not see black farmers as animal farmers. In KwaZulu-Natal they’ve taken all the animal extension staff and retrained them to work with vegetables and crops because they don’t believe there’s any market out there for animals.

There’s huge pressure to create wealth based on land – but it’s not so simple.

There are not many obvious solutions to these problems.

There are lots of experts around, but they are white, and they work in NGOs or as academics – there aren’t experts in government.

Many of these experts are employed by the state to supplement capacity, and there is still the issue of whites seeming to be telling blacks what to do.

There is a huge civil service but limited capacity and a problematic extension service.

“Farmers” are not recognised within government frameworks and feel un-serviced.

Most South Africans live in a livestock environment that usually makes it difficult to till the soil. Vegetable farmers have to struggle to keep the goats out…

How we work with the state:

- They are our primary up-scalers.
- We pilot with them in the belief that they will see the success of what we do and scale this up through policy and implementation.
- We share products such as hooks and weight belts with them.
- We hope we can persuade them to change the research agenda.
- We lobby for better alignment between departments to implement pilots and other initiatives.

Key policy lessons for the state to ponder:

- There is farming and value adding everywhere, but you have to be in the mode to recognise, appreciate and grow it.
- Farmers aren’t strong men or business people or tender chasers but often the opposite – a widow, a woman working on a small scale.
- True government/NGO partnerships need to be established as state and treasury policy.
- Research agendas need to be tightened to solve real African problems, especially where the state subsidises the research.
- Co-operatives are not natural states of society or groups.
- The social glue and dynamics are often the hardest and most complicated part of group farming concepts. We can talk as much as we like about finances and other issues, but often it’s just one difficult person who can bring a project to a halt.”
often it’s just one difficult person who can bring a project to a halt. We need to look at the social dynamics and how to improve them.

- Agriculture does not need discovery, it needs recognition.
- Our problem is not the 3 000 farmers, it’s the 3 million.
- Consultancies that don’t transfer skills are job creation projects for consultancies. We say a consultant should come to a group three times – if they haven’t transferred skills to local people by then, we won’t work further with them.
- Do we really need more government employees?
- Do we believe in people’s own capital – e.g. people using their grants for goats? We have to believe that people have their own capital to contribute.
- Learning and piloting don’t have space in a tender environment.
- Scaling from touchy-feely NGO success to technical bureaucratic state systems can mangle almost any solution. We need to address this.

The photograph on this page comes from a National Geographic photo essay on goats in Sudan. This is a country that has been in a state of civil war for 20 years. And yet 1.2 million goats per year get sent from Sudan to Saudi Arabia – with no government, no extension services or other state systems to make this happen. You look at the photo and think, it could really work.
**Post-presentation discussion**

*Wim van Averbeke:* I have three questions. First, what would be the key research questions you would pose about goats? And, second, you said there are no records about goats, but I’d be surprised if people don’t know the key variables about their goats since it looks like they are an important asset. Third, about the barefoot veterinarians – the profits from that business seem to come from buying in bulk and then selling with a margin. What stops people from pushing the margin they can get for this service beyond a reasonable mark-up?

*Rauri Alcock:* In answer to the last question – we have already had problems with that. People doing this business are ones getting stipends from the state and sometimes they are challenged about what they are charging for medicines; we keep a very strict record of what they are selling and how much farmers are paying for it. Eventually the market will balance itself out, as farmers get wise to what is going on, but it may take another 2–3 years to get to that point and for now we as an NGO are keeping track of what the government is giving for free and making sure that that is being distributed at no charge. And the other aspect of this is correct dosage – there is the danger that they under-dose and overcharge. What we keep track of, more than numbers of animals, is whether the animals are correctly weighed, what was the dose, what was the disease, did the farmer pay you, did the goat die afterwards, etc. The question of keeping good records links to the research question, which is why do goats die? It’s mainly because of disease and stress, and it’s mostly the females and very young kids that die. Farmers don’t even count them until they’re over two months because so many will die before that. So it’s very difficult to keep track of mortality rates and causes. There is a lot of research needed in this regard.

*François Lategan:* Relating to your comment about the extension services – here is an opportunity to think creatively. The concept of extension/farmer ratios is traditionally associated with an economic concept – inputs, outputs etc. In your environment, if you could decide, what would be the most important issues that should be included in an extension policy for that environment?

*RA:* There are two extension officers in Msinga for 37 000 families, half a million livestock – realistically, all they can do is what vets do, try to control disease. What would be useful at a state level would be if they were able to support the community livestock people by backing them on big issues. For example, meeting with the livestock association people at dip days and asking them what issues have come up; and then feeding this back to government. The state is spending many millions of rands on medicines that they throw away every year, because they’ve expired. You need the extension officers to channel medicines to the right people, and make sure they know what the medicines are for and how to dose. The problem is not that the

“The problem is not that the extension service is not spending money, it’s that the money is being spent in the wrong way.”
extension service is not spending money, it’s that the money is being spent in the wrong way. There needs to be a better way to get medicines into the community, with the least resistance from government officials so that they don’t block things from happening but rather smooth the path for them. If extension officers worked with the barefoot vets rather than the leadership in communities, you would see a huge difference.

*Tommy Mohajane:* Is there anything like a national breed of goat?

*RA:* No.

*TM:* Then what particular breed would you go for to spread throughout the country? And the question of goats being problematic – is it better to fence them in? If you were given funds to address this particular issue in a community, how would you deal with the question of infrastructure – does it depend on what type of goats are there?

*RA:* When you work with the farmer you don’t speak about breeds – you work with what people have. If you bring goats in from another area, they die from local diseases. We don’t believe in fencing; the more research is done the more it gets demonstrated that goats need to scavenge widely in order to survive, 3.5 km in any direction. Goats need to move; it’s no use trying to keep them in a camp of a size that would be commercially viable.

*Ben Cousins:* Thirty per cent of households in Msinga own cattle – ten thousand households. Bush encroachment is happening on a rapid scale down the eastern seaboard – maybe because of climate change. Cattle will be affected. Does the change in the natural environment mean that goats are going to become more important than cattle over time?

*RA:* We’re already seeing it with fat-tailed sheep in the Msinga area. As the bush comes in, the sheep go – they can’t survive in that environment. It’s inevitable that cattle are going to get more restricted by the bush, and goats are going to come in. Where there are big kraals with many goats, the bush is in beautiful condition. How many goats you’d need to maintain this is unknown.

“As the bush comes in, the sheep go – they can’t survive in that environment. It’s inevitable that cattle are going to get more restricted by the bush, and goats are going to come in.”
GOAT COMMERCIALISATION: SOME LESSONS FROM PAST EXPERIENCE

Brigid Letty
Institute for Natural Resources

I have been involved over a long period with various plans and pilots for goat commercialisation:

- The Gijima Msinga Goat Commercialisation Plan (2008) was drawn up by a group of departmental staff, researchers, and various others involved in goat farming – it hasn’t even been opened since then even though it came up with quite a lot of answers to questions we are still asking. Documents like this get prepared and then don’t go anywhere – we need to talk about how to make the things happen that they propose. Recommendations from this plan are given at the end of the presentation.

- I was involved over the two years 2010/11–2011/12 with a Department of Economic Development pilot goat commercialisation initiative. People say that there is no space for pilots in a tender environment; in fact there is space, but the problem is that no one likes the fact that sometimes a pilot doesn’t work as well as it was supposed to. That is an issue we must return to: how do you learn from pilots instead of being frustrated because they don’t turn out as you expected?

  - There were three pilot sites: Msinga, Ulundi, Mbazwana.
  - The projects were on communal land (Ingonyama Trust).
  - Infrastructure development involved sheds and handling facilities.
  - Supply of goats was part of the project – we insisted that they had to be indigenous goats, locally procured. There are so many municipal projects where the goats die after three months; and it doesn’t help to bring goats in from another district, they all die from local diseases in the new area.
  - Training and mentorship were provided.
  - Business plan development happened (at the end!) – this is an issue. If the business plan had been developed at the outset it might have influenced the number of people in the project and the outcome. What does it mean to support 12 people with a 200-goat project, in terms of return per individual?

- In 2011 I was involved with Gugwini, a project through the Agri-business Development Agency (ADA). We were asked to help with:
− revising an existing business plan;
− establishment of enterprise on land restitution property;
− infrastructure development;
− supply of goats: we pushed for indigenous goats. There was reluctance among participants who wanted Boer goats; we managed to get some indigenous goats into the project to be integrated into the herds.
− training and mentorship. The first problem with this was that the beneficiaries don’t live on the farm. So the person you are trying to train is an employee of the beneficiary who manages the farm, and despite the unemployment situation the beneficiaries couldn’t keep employees on their farms. They were continually having to replace people, provide the training again, etc.

□ In 2012 I was asked by AFRA to give short-term support on a labour tenant farm where women were farming goats. But there weren’t enough goats for them to go to market – there are points at which people simply can’t engage with marketing.

□ Experience from the **auctions in Msinga**. There have been two auctions where one of my students did research.

− The auctions involved the DRDLR and DAEA, AAM (a commercial auctioneer) and Mdukatshani.
− In March 2013: more than 500 goats were sold, with the result that R500 000 was injected into the community as prices were really good:
  − 272 goats sold for more than R1 000.
  − 277 goats sold at prices ranging from R1 100–1 500 up to R2 300.
− In November 2014: Everyone was excited because of the previous auction, and recruited farmers to bring goats to the auction. AAM did not anticipate how many goats would be brought to the auction. The results were:
  − There were more goats than expected, and not enough buyers.
  − 911 goats were sold but the average price was R712. People were unhappy.
  − The highest price paid was R7 500. But people were being offered R250 for a goat in some cases, because of the poor condition of some of the goats.
  − 379 goats were not presented for sale (because of their quality/condition).
  − 158 were presented but not sold (because farmers wouldn’t accept poor prices).
  − The total takings amounted to R849 290.

□ This experience led people to realise that you can have goat auctions in rural areas and people – including farmers with only small numbers of goats – will sell them. The buyers

“People say that there is no space for pilots in a tender environment; in fact there is space, but the problem is that no one likes the fact that sometimes a pilot doesn’t work as well as it was supposed to.”
were mainly farmers buying breeding stock, including quite a lot from the Eastern Cape.

- What do people want? They want ‘pretty goats’ – goats with a certain appearance that they prefer: for example coloured goats, not black goats. And they want goats in good condition – if the farmers realise they won’t be able to sell goats in poor condition, this may create the impetus for them to invest more in their livestock.

- What is needed? Tattooing for legal identification, proper liaison with buyers and sellers. There is a programme in KwaZulu-Natal where farmers register an identification tattoo with each of the dip tank committees, so that their goats can be identified based on this, if not as individual goats. This becomes a very important issue if there is going to be a big auction – the amount of time involved in getting people and goats to the auction, facilitating transport etc., is enormous. It also raises questions about whether these big auctions are the way to go, or whether it would be better to organise smaller, decentralised markets, support forward linkages to small traders and so on, with smaller facilities where people sell once a week.

Existing opportunities and realities:

- There is demand for live goats for slaughter.
- It’s an existing resource in much of KwaZulu-Natal – people have goats, and an understanding of how to manage them.
- Goat farming has the ability to address bush encroachment.
- The indigenous goat is a relatively “tough” animal.
- There is an existing level of knowledge amongst farmers – it’s not something entirely new to them.
- People do sell currently, though in limited quantities.
- Land reform provides space for new enterprises. Maybe there are different commercial models we should be looking at for communal areas.

External support provided to small-scale farmers:

- Training is provided (short courses); it covers goat management, basic business skills; the DAFF is involved in training in certain respects.
- We also have farmers training other farmers, once they have attended a course – showing colleagues what they have learnt on a course or visit.
- Cross-visits: we took people up to a farm near Pongola where a black farmer had 500 goats – people appreciated seeing someone “like them” doing well with goats.
- Mentorship: regular visits.
- Engaging potential markets – traders, not abattoirs; there is a negligible number of goats going to abattoirs. It’s the live market that we must focus on.
• Registering identification marks with the DAFF.
• Facilitating access to departmental staff (vet services especially). There needs to be someone who can play a brokerage role to draw in support services to help the farmers.
• Infrastructure and goats with boreholes. The question arises of who can make decisions about infrastructure once it is provided; for example, once a farmer has received a borehole can she use it for a vegetable plot? How do we make people see that it’s their borehole, they can do with it whatever they want?
• We have been involved with developing guidelines for animal health and other aspects of livestock farming (with the DAEA, Mdukatshani and Heifer).

The photos on these pages give an indication of the infrastructure farmers have, and who they are. Some infrastructure has been put in by the Department of Agriculture, for example the goat shed in the photo alongside; there are also projects being run by other departments such as the Department of Economic Development. How should these interventions be co-ordinated across departments?

The photos give a sense of the fact that there are quite a lot of young people active in the projects. This is a way of getting young people involved; and I wonder whether the women who are learning business skills through the projects are applying them in any other ways – we haven’t assessed this. Perhaps there are spinoffs in that respect. Other unintended benefits come from people – especially older women – acquiring confidence and skills such as public speaking.

On the question of institutional strengthening:
• Why is institutional strengthening key to success? This relates to the sorts of decisions farmers should make themselves rather than having to live with decisions made by other people. These decisions include:
  – location of infrastructure: the department will put infrastructure where it wants to even if this doesn’t suit the way farmers want to use it. Farmers need to be part of the discussions about this.
  – decisions to sell or retain, and what to sell. This is more complicated in groups than as individual farmers.
  – how to split profits and manage finance;
  – how to deal with conflicts;
  – ownership of a project and maintenance of infrastructure. In the end the farmers work out a way to upgrade or alter infrastructure to be more suitable for their needs, if they are able to make the decisions for themselves.
Goat farmer characteristics:
- Project membership was very diverse:
  - Some were commercially oriented individuals.
  - Some had vehicles, others were poorly resourced.
  - Project members included male and female farmers, and quite a number of youth.
  - Decision makers were mainly male and older.
- Non-project goat farmers (i.e. households owning goats) included:
  - households with small flocks;
  - households with more than 150 goats.
  - There is a continuum from subsistence farming through opportunistic marketing to focused marketing.
- Land reform beneficiaries – I’ve had interaction with two groups:
  - land restitution
  - labour tenants.

On the questions of learning from and sustainability of the project:
- Learning from Department of Economic Development projects has involved:
  - learning by the project team, in the form of experiential learning;
  - learning by officials, via reporting, and monitoring and evaluation processes;
  - learning by farmers, through training and mentorship as well as through experiential learning.
  - What about learning across organisations? The Department of Economic Development project report is now going to the Department of Agriculture; hopefully they will be able to learn from that.
- There are huge issues around the sustainability and scalability of projects. A lot of money and time and mentoring costs have been invested – is it justifiable, and scalable?

Challenges facing the projects:
- Land reform – this has its own challenges:
  - Beneficiaries are not necessarily farmers.
  - Beneficiaries are not always living on the farm.
  - We can’t assume labourers will stay in a farm job, so can’t rely on training them.
  - Beneficiaries have been mainly old.
  - Mentorship has not been long enough or intensive enough.
  - There are institutional challenges.
Challenges posed by groups (co-operatives):
- power dynamics;
- tension or conflict of interest between farmers’ own (individual) activities and project activities

Structural constraints that the programme addresses or faces:
- marketing (structured rather than just opportunistic);
- pressure on natural resources – an issue that comes up all the time. The biggest problem in this regard is the assumption that there is space for new projects.
- access to medicines;
- access to knowledge and technical support.

Projects that target individuals and small groups don’t address these issues as they affect the bigger localities beyond the projects. How could projects be designed to have broader benefits than programmes that targeting these localities?

The Gijima Plan 2008 Recommendations:
(In the recommendations below ‘T/C’ refers to a distinction made between ‘traditional’ and ‘commercial’ flocks in terms of which recommendations were relevant or applicable.)

- Lack of coordination:
  - T/C 1.1 Form localised groups that represent goat owners and a structure that represents goat owners throughout the municipality.

- Goat health:
  - T/C 2.1 Provide training in health care (prevention and treatment of disease).
  - T/C 2.2 Develop a system for improving the availability of veterinary drugs: improve access to veterinary products, through establishing accredited suppliers; form groups that can buy and share drugs.
  - T 2.3 Work with farmers to document indigenous knowledge practices so that there is no loss of knowledge and so that knowledge can be shared effectively.

- Flock management:
  - T/C 2.4 Provide training (information days and short courses) that covers a range of topics related to flock and business management.
  - T/C 2.5 Establish demonstration facilities for training purposes at the pilot sales facility.
Low productivity:
- T/C 2.6 Train farmers in a system for identifying individual animals in a flock and tracking production characteristics.
- T/C 2.8 Investigate ways of supplementing goats in winter.
- C 2.9 Supplement young animals so that they can be marketed earlier (consider lucerne production).

Dogs:
- T/C 3.1 Groups / co-operative to approach amakhosi about enforcing fines on owners of dogs.

Theft:
- T/C 3.2 Owners to mark their goats with legal forms of identification e.g. tattooing.
- T/C 1.3 Groups to establish relationship with stock theft unit and develop a system for reporting and responding to theft.

Finance:
- Finance for inputs and equipment: 4.1 Farmers to sell goats and invest in necessary inputs and equipment.
- Start-up capital: C 4.2 Support individuals to prepare and submit business plans to institutions.

What should goat commercialisation mean?
We need to:
- link people to markets (i.e. live goat markets), “create the pull”, THEN...
- empower people to manage goats better (reduce mortality etc.), to manage finances, to negotiate with buyers (do people know what their animals are worth?);
- build on what is there (households, existing active co-operatives and other projects);
- introduce relevant interventions for different types of farmers (in terms of scale):
  - small numbers, which means less pressure, less disease
  - larger numbers, which means incidences of coccidiosis and other diseases increase, and more investment is required;
- establish co-operatives to purchase inputs and market goats – not necessarily to produce them;
- upgrade facilities at homestead level – provide some form of shelter from bad weather, clean water, improved hygiene, creep feed, facilities to separate sick animals from the flock, simple handling facilities;

“If we want to establish new goat farming projects maybe we should focus on land reform land rather than on communal areas.”
• introduce or improve record keeping for the flock and the business. Farmers, not
government, need to do this;
• investigate whether there is space for new projects in communal areas. If there is space,
is it currently being used – and if not, why not? If we want to establish new goat farming
projects maybe we should focus on land reform land rather than on communal areas.

Policy messages for government
Government needs to take the following into consideration when formulating new policies:
• Don’t focus on projects at the expense of core functions of government – we should
rather have a province-wide goat extension support programme.
• Should we be supporting small traders to strengthen the value chain?
• Ownership of government projects must lie with government (or better still with the
beneficiaries) – it can’t lie with consultants.
• Relevant line departments must be involved from conceptualisation to implementation,
and clear definitions of roles and responsibilities must be outlined.
• There needs to be more space in tender processes for service providers to introduce their
own ideas.
• An important message: Don’t compete with existing enterprises and livelihoods.
• Should we tie entrepreneurial people to projects? Would they do better on their own?
How could government be supporting them as individuals?
• Are we recognising that supplying “own needs” for slaughter purposes for cultural or
food needs is replacing the need to buy goats? We should put a value on this use of
goats, as well as on the market as a source of value.
• We need to learn from pilots more effectively.
“Most of the people in our projects have their own goats; in my view it would have been better to have a project that didn’t involve additional goats, and rather to work only with what people already have.”

**Post-presentation discussion**

*Francois Lategan:* How prevalent is it that you find more than one project competing for the attention of a community, and does this concurrence dilute the impact of one project in favour of another, or in some other way disrupt the projects?

*Tozamile Lukhalo:* I’m a bit worried about terminology used in the presentation – the term “government projects” has the connotation of a top-down approach, whereas the projects should be community-driven, based on the needs analysis coming from that community and what they tell government they need.

*Tommy Mohajane:* Can you explain the sentence ‘don’t compete with existing enterprises and livelihoods’ in your list of policy messages?

*Brigid Letty:* The idea of not competing with existing enterprises is that if you have an area that can only sustain 1 000 goats, and you establish a project that aims at having 500 goats, you are competing with people who already have goats. That is a huge issue in communal areas where people are already at their threshold. There are two elements of competition – between the person in the project and the person in the house next door who is not in the project; and between the two herds of the person who has goats at home and goats in the project – where do they put their focus? Most of the people in our projects have their own goats; in my view it would have been better to have a project that didn’t involve additional goats, and rather to work only with what people already have.

In response to Tozamile’s question: There are quite a lot of projects being proposed by government where they see opportunities and want to pilot projects that will allow those opportunities to be exploited. I think that in this case that was the Department of Economic Development’s rationale – they saw all the goats coming into the province from the Northern Cape and elsewhere.

*Rauri Alcock:* A million goats a year come into KwaZulu-Natal from elsewhere in South Africa and from across the borders.

*Ben Cousins:* That’s a billion rands’ worth of goats – that is something not reflected in the national account.

*RA:* It does get reflected, because the goats are being bought from commercial farmers outside the province.
Mdukatshani – Household Chicken Production

Gugu Mbatha

Mdukatshani is located in KwaZulu-Natal and works mainly in the Msinga/Weenen rural areas. We support farmers on land reform farms and those in the former Kwazulu with regard to improving village chicken production.

The Mdukatshani Rural Development Project is currently working with 62 groups of chicken farmers (with a minimum of 20 farmers per group), mostly dominated by women. We work with in-school youth (in clubs, not in the classroom) and out-of-school youth; we usually call them community livestock workers (CLWs) rather than community animal health workers (CAHWs), because they are involved with more than just the health aspect of livestock.

Farmers are producing in different optimal flock sizes. This relates back to Ben Cousins’ typology of farmers (Typology B): if farmers are producing for the market they have to use more inputs at a certain cost; if they’re producing only for consumption the input costs are close to zero.

Why chickens?
- Almost every household owns a number of chickens.
- Chickens are socially categorised as women’s livestock in terms of decision-making. Most of the farmers we work with are older women, who freely make decisions about slaughtering, selling, or using the chickens for cultural ceremonies and so on.
- Chickens are easy to produce at no cost.
- They are a source of protein (meat and eggs).
- They are used for cultural ceremonies, and as a source of income.

We promote the local breed wherever we work, because they have a greater resistance to disease, and they survive in harsh conditions. Breeds are also associated with colours that have social and cultural significance – people will use a chicken of a certain colour in a specific ceremony.

Solving problems using indigenous knowledge
As part of our commitment to promoting and strengthening indigenous knowledge and farming practices, we encourage the use of traditional methods of feeding chickens. There is a problem when chicks are born in winter – they don’t survive the cold weather, and many eggs don’t hatch out in winter. It is also hard for chicks to scavenge enough protein in
winter. MaMchunu Dlamini’s solution, which we encourage people to use, is to only allow one batch of chicks to hatch in winter, and use winter-laid eggs for nutrition. The unhatched eggs are cooked and ground up with mealie meal to feed these chicks through the winter.

This diagram shows how our interventions are connected to the cycle of chicken farming.

Another problem we deal with is protecting chicken nests against predation. Indigenous hens lay everywhere, for example under wood piles. It’s important to have a system so that you know where the eggs and chicks are. There is also the problem of dogs eating the eggs. And hens lay in the old containers, where eggs go rotten.

We involve the local youth to create solutions to the problems, and they earn money for the nests they make. They know how to do this because they have experience of the traditional methods they’ve learned at home:
- They make different kinds of nest using local resources.
- They put nests in the trees and on long poles to prevent dogs from eating the eggs.
- They use materials that easily adapt to all weather conditions such as agave, bamboo and left-over timber.

The photos on this page give an idea of the nest construction methods they use.

We also support farmers in their use of indigenous remedies. For example, they put down mbesa, an indigenous snake-repellent, around the places where the chickens have their nests to protect them from snakes.
How we work and learn

We don’t give handouts but instead support farmers to improve what they have. We work with them, using outside expertise and local knowledge so as to create more productive livestock systems through local testing of ideas and management systems. We learn and share knowledge through theme days (where farmers choose a topic to focus on for a day, and give us the task of finding information on that topic for them), exchange visits, farmers’ days and more hands-on trainings.

We also support knowledge transfer, by introducing youth into the programme, so that the older people in the community can pass on the knowledge they learned from their own parents and grandparents. Youth can then add value to the flocks, for example by castrating extra cocks that are not needed for breeding in a flock. This makes the meat softer and more tasty.

If farmers want to try new ideas based on what they’ve seen on other farms, we don’t block them but instead we learn together the advantages and disadvantages. And the farmers share their experience with their fellow farmers.

Current joint work with the provincial Department of Agriculture:

- We work together to involve women in livestock associations. In KwaZulu-Natal there are 9 livestock associations, but they are just for cattle owners; we are trying to involve farmers of all types of livestock in these associations – chicken and goat farmers as well as cattle farmers.
- We have produced a joint manual with the KwaZulu-Natal DAE drawing on our experience with the farmers.
- We try to involve extension officers in our experiments and information days. This can be a problem because we invite them, and then when they come they just criticise everything we are doing.

Our current scaling-up models with the Department of Rural Development (DRD) include the following activities:

- We have Community Livestock Workers (CLWs) at 62 dip tanks under the Msinga Livestock Association.
- The Department of Rural Development has employed 130 CLWs to support farmers in the Associations. Our method is to buy kits for the CLWs and they must then work with the farmers to earn money – the farmers pay for their services. But the DRD also pays them a stipend and this causes problems, because now they know they will get money every month even if they just sit at home, instead of visiting the farmers.
The livestock audit per dip tank includes farmers that are not cattle owners. The CLWs are supposed to do this but it is not yet complete because of their reluctance to do the work, since they are already being paid the stipend. This is one of the challenges we need to overcome.

What we hope to achieve:
- We hope that government will adapt our models and replicate them outside Msinga on a large scale.
- We hope village chickens will get more recognition because of their nutritional value and cultural significance.
- We hope that chicken farmers will also become part of the livestock associations and get support in terms of vaccinations.

How the farmers continue without us:
- All our groups are compelled to have a young CLW working with them from the beginning, to groom them to be independent of us.
- What we want to see is that the CLWs render service to farmers and get paid for the work done or service rendered. In this way they can create income for themselves independently of government.
- From the start of our work with the farmers, they always choose topics for theme days. If there are no new issues that they want us to deal with, it’s a signal that that group is ready to carry on without our direct intervention.

What could a government programme doing the same work look like?
- It would support livestock associations to involve all types of livestock instead of cattle.
- It would provide regular vaccines (ND) to chicken farmers.
- Chickens should be the core work of CAHWs/CLWs so as to create momentum. It is easy to work with chickens; they triple their numbers very quickly. And the farmers are women, who are easy to work with.
- The government would distribute medicines that are suitable for harsh rural conditions – for example heat-stable medicines that don’t need to be refrigerated, because of the lack of electricity in many rural areas.

What should government learn from this project?
- To run programmes and projects that encourage and promote farmers’ independence from the state. What this work has taught us is that as soon as government comes along with handouts, farmers stop being willing to pay for services as they did before.
- To empower individual chicken farmers instead of co-operatives of people who have different goals.
- To support vets to provide vaccines that are suitable for rural conditions (such as heat-stable vaccines).
- To listen, learn and pilot innovations before rolling them out. Government should make finance available to listen to farmers, and find out what they want, before building infrastructure that the farmers don’t want and won’t use.

**POST-PRESENTATION DISCUSSION**

*Louise de Klerk:* In China the Peking duck has to be bred with great attention to feeding quality, and it is closely monitored by extension officers who visit every farmer. Is there a way to change the women chicken breeders into an incubation opportunity, a “Peking duck initiative”, without disrupting what they do now based on their indigenous knowledge and skills? Perhaps if you give the idea to the women they can figure out something themselves, without you imposing it.

*Vuyani Somyo:* I agree that in most cases co-operatives don’t work, whereas individual farmers we have assisted in the Nguni project are growing their herds and doing well.

*Gugu Mbatha:* The thing that is driving livestock associations now is the dip – people know if they go to the association meeting they will get access to a dip, if there is no dip available the attendance drops. Maybe government can do the same thing with vaccinations – women will know that if they go there they will get their animals vaccinated.

*Wim van Averbeke:* Have you done any work on how benefits are accrued from the chickens – how much is consumed at home, what is being sold etc?

*GM:* Yes, but it’s a very complicated business to count chickens... We keep monthly records for the farmers based on a monthly visit; but chickens produce very quickly and it’s hard for the farmer to remember what they have sold, what died in the household, etc. We’ve started to ask the farmers to mark on paper anything that happens with a chicken – sales, slowners, deaths etc. A farmer who slaughters 5 chickens a month is saving about R350 per month, at the current price of R70 per broiler in the villages. We haven’t yet written up all this information.

*Tozamile Lukhalo:* I’m a bit worried about the CLWs that look like a law unto themselves; and that we as government are trying to fix extension and at some point they will end up being called extension officers, without the proper training. Who appointed these people – was it the communities, who now can’t control them? Who do these CLWs report to? They will end up wrecking the extension plan that we are working on.

“What this work has taught us is that as soon as government comes along with handouts, farmers stop being willing to pay for services as they did before.”
“Should we reconceptualise ‘commercialisation’ as ‘markets’ and just start talking about different kinds of highly differentiated markets, starting at a very small scale, rather than always assuming that the end goal is a highly formalised understanding of ‘commercial markets’?”

GM: The CLWs only had three days training because of the rush to get them back to their communities to prepare for the goat auctions. But the DRDLR says they will send them to accredited institutions, where they will get formal training. I must admit, we have created a monster – when there were only twenty of them we could work directly with them, they were there in meetings and in the community, we could influence what they were doing. But now that there are 130, spread over a big area, it’s hard to control them.

Michael Aliber: Is it because of the stipend that they are now a problem, whereas before they were in effect entrepreneurs?

Rauri Alcock: The DRDLR at the very local level is causing lots of problems; they extend deadlines, they have their own little political structures in communities and it is a mess. People at very senior levels in the DRD are trying to fix it. Things are understood very well at the top levels in the department, but at the bottom levels, it’s unbelievable.

MA: But it also seems to be quite a good model, like the Village Link Persons we heard about in another presentation. Rather than be worried about it, isn’t it something that we could try to fix so that it can’t be corrupted?

RA: We should sack all of them and re-employ them as individuals who get paid to do a job.

Ben Cousins: This is an interesting policy idea – people get paid as entrepreneurs if they provide services to farmers, and if they don’t provide the service they don’t get paid.

VS: Before giving them the stipend government should have trained those people and accredited them. We work with people who are paid by the NRF, and they know if they don’t do what we tell them to do in terms of our project, we will report back to NRF and they will lose their NRF pay.

BC: Should we reconceptualise “commercialisation” as “markets” and just start talking about different kinds of highly differentiated markets, starting at a very small scale, rather than always assuming that the end goal is a highly formalised understanding of “commercial markets”? We have seen in many of the presentations how even the smallest farmers start to sell, as soon as they can’t consume everything they produce – i.e. they are participating in markets. This is something we need to consider as we discuss the key issues this action-dialogue has raised tomorrow.
PART III: WHAT ARE THE BROAD LESSONS FOR POLICY?
POLICY MAKERS’ RESPONSES TO PRACTITIONER PRESENTATIONS

Several government officials involved with policy development were invited to attend the action-dialogue, but not all were able to do so. The policy makers present for some or all sessions were:

- Mastoera Sadan of the Programme to Support Pro-poor Policy Development in South Africa (PSPPD), a partnership between the Presidency, the Republic of South Africa and the European Union
- Dr Moshe Swartz, Deputy Director General and head of the Rural Enterprise and Industrial Development (REID) branch of the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR)
- Tozamile Lukhalo, Director – National Extension Reform in the Department of Agriculture Forestry & Fisheries (DAFF).

Other participants who were asked to provide inputs relating directly to government policy were Kenneth Carden, who included his policy commentary in his presentation on the Southern African Food Lab (see Part II above), and Professor Nick Vink, whose paper analysing government farmer support programmes is included in this section of the report.

In sessions following groups of presentations on Day 1 and Day 2 the policy makers were asked to respond to the project presentations, and specifically to comment on the lessons they felt could be learnt from these projects for future policy development relating to the small-scale farming sector. Their responses, in the form of a group discussion (Day 1) and individual presentations (Day 2) are summarised below.

FIRST POLICY MAKERS’ RESPONSE SESSION

At the start of the first policy makers’ response session, which followed the Siyavuna and Timbali presentations on Day 1, Mastoera Sadan of the PSPPD made a brief statement about the value of events such as this action-dialogue for government and for support agencies such as the PSPPD, a partnership between the Presidency and the European Union which contributed to the funding of this event. She said that gatherings of this type provide occasions for people involved in policy development and support to learn directly from expert practitioners in the field. The PSPPD has managed to get policy makers and researchers to talk to each other, but it hasn’t been that easy to get practitioners around the table as well. She praised the organisers for coining the term ‘action-dialogue’ in which the emphasis on action is

“Are there ways to think creatively about franchising . . .? Is there a basic minimum set of standards, or a system, that can be applied to make these large-scale social interventions successful?”
clear, because to address the many challenges that South Africa faces 20 years into democracy, talk is valuable but action is also necessary.

Further responses from the policy makers covered the following issues:

- **On the continuum between large-scale and creative interventions**, is there a middle ground? The idea of franchising seems promising where government is aiming to set up models of social intervention across the country. For example in the area of early childhood development (ECD), the policy has been to have centre-based models, and now government is thinking about how to use home-based models. Are there ways to think creatively about franchising in relation to the Timbali approach? Is there a basic minimum set of standards, or a system, that can be applied to make these large-scale social interventions successful?

- **On the question of collaboration between projects and government**, there are lessons to be learnt about how government can work together creatively with external role players. Government policy developers in the social sector struggle with the question of how to work with NGOs; as well as providing funding, there should be a critical engagement with the work done by small-scale and model projects.

- The “X factor” in successful programmes is often that they have **very good leadership, and passionate individuals** who are willing to take risks, to keep knocking on doors no matter how many times the doors are slammed shut. When government wants to scale up the kind of work done by these projects, this must be taken into account. For example, is Timbali the gold standard for small-scale agribusiness development, and at scale does government have to settle for the bronze standard – or aim for gold in some places and silver in others?

- Government tends to have a **cookie-cutter approach to intervention** or ‘service delivery’: the same solution must be given to everyone. In the presentations the issue of differentiation was significant. In the presentations the issue of differentiation was significant. . .

“Government tends to have a cookie-cutter approach to intervention or ‘service delivery’: the same solution must be given to everyone. In the presentations the issue of differentiation was significant. . .”
capacity or other factors. Government has to deliver at scale, and there are good delivery systems for “blunt instruments” like the CSG. The kinds of complex and differentiated interventions described in the presentations involve very intensive work; they can’t be delivered in the way that a grant can. Questions such as how people in government-supported projects manage the funds they receive, the limits imposed by low literacy levels etc., all need to be addressed. Projects show great creativity in dealing with these problems, but government operates under severe limitations: it has become very compliance-driven, and has to report on “delivery” of services and resources in quantitative terms, regardless of the challenges involved. The government system makes it difficult in some respects to implement or support some of the most innovative options.

- There needs to be increased engagement between researchers, practitioners and policy makers. Policy makers and government support programmes like the PSPPD need to visit projects like Timbali or Siyavuna on a regular basis, to get a more profound sense of the work being done and the challenges faced on the ground. Likewise there need to be more action-dialogues like the present one. The world viewed from the “koppie in Pretoria” is far removed from ordinary people’s lives.

- The issue of agency should be critically examined. In 1994 the new ANC-led government set itself up as the agency that would “deliver” to people, and that is still the main feature of the service delivery discourse – with the implication that people must just be patient. But the fact that people in government think they have the answers to all social and economic problems and can deliver them to people is very problematic. We need to be mindful of changing dynamics in the country in terms of class and race; in the agricultural sector in particular we must recognise the entrenched interests of groups like white big farmers, agribusiness and the emerging black elite. We need to be mindful of the policy options that these changes create, and then of the choices that we make from among these options. In particular we need to consider whether policies really empower farmers – often government policies and other interventions have the unintended consequence of disempowering farmers.

- There has not been enough discussion, debate and contestation about the content of the National Development Plan and the proposals it makes. Forums such as this action-dialogue should undertake this kind of critical engagement with policies and proposals coming from government.

“. . . the fact that people in government think they have the answers to all social and economic problems and can deliver them to people is very problematic. . .”
SECOND POLICY MAKERS’ RESPONSE SESSION

On Day 2, Moshe Swartz and Tozamile Lukhalo each gave short presentations focusing on policy issues relating to their departments. Moshe Swartz began by explaining that his work involves rural development rather than agriculture, and that the Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform is very strongly committed to rural people having ownership and control over their development – something which of course relates to land, livestock and cropping as well as to other aspects of rural development. He went on to argue that this forum could not solve all the problems of agriculture in South Africa, since the answers to some of these problems don’t lie in the agricultural sphere. From a policy maker’s perspective, government is working in a highly structured and constrained environment because of the constant need to meet compliance requirements when taking action, and this affects any strategies it might want to implement in regard to agriculture.

DEPARTMENT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND LAND REFORM

Moshe Swartz
Deputy Director General and head of the Rural Enterprise and Industrial Development (REID) branch of the DRDLR

When government officials go into a community they don’t do so without first talking to the municipality, because the villages they want to work with are in the first instance controlled by the municipality, not by national government. When a province is chosen as a pilot site for a government programme such as the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP), there first has to be agreement between national and provincial political heads about the choice of province. When the MECs and the mayors meet in their MINMEC, together with deputy directors general and municipal managers, they have to link up with the MINTEC to say where the next stop for the pilot will be. Thus, implementation of any pilot must be preceded by consultation at all levels in a straitjacketed, constrained environment.

Then, the departments must coordinate their GIS systems in scanning the environment to decide where to go to implement any comprehensive rural development programme. When a site has been chosen, the DRDLR must then train young people to use the cellphone-
based NISIS (National Integrated Social Information System) data collection instrument, together with Statistics South Africa. They go door-to-door to households to collect data that can populate the NISIS.

Having done that, the DRDLR then calls the community together for a co-visioning exercise, saying to them “this is what we found in your households, can you agree with this? What do we do with this information?” The department then uses university specialists in Participatory Rural Assessment (PRA) to assist it in going back to the communities to find out more about how they want to see their village – i.e. we use community-designed PRA for community-based development.

We then bring all the government departments together – or at least that is the wish, it doesn’t always happen in reality. This whole process is about improving the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), so that provincial growth and development strategies are informed by the IDPs that come from the reality of the people.

We as the department are tasked with co-ordinating rural development, but we find ourselves having to implement projects, because of institutional failings in government. We have found old people living alone in terrible conditions, because the social development systems are not working. But the bigger issue is the failure of ubuntu – there is no ‘community’ in communities. Co-ordination is a nightmare in government, let alone interactive planning in complex contexts like communities.

We form councils of stakeholders, based on street committees like those that were formed in the 1980s, with a chairperson for each street committee who can take issues to the council. It’s difficult to get people to attend these gatherings.

The CRDP is aimed at getting people into co-operatives. We are supposed to form co-operatives even though the Department of Trade and Industry tells us that there is a 97% attrition rate in co-ops. We have to find ways to overcome this. Over half the co-operative farms that we have established since 1994 are no longer productive – we are hoping to learn from academics and researchers and the people at this action-dialogue how we can turn this around.

Food security is a major issue – there are households who just want to eat. There is a deliberate process now for us to get involved with establishing household gardens.

In the CRDP we start by appreciating what people have done for themselves. We go towards them with the positive assumption that life among them is not a total chaos – there

“We want to use communities themselves as their own change agents, to take them back to the village ethos that used to exist.”
is hope there, despite the poverty and destitution that exists in those communities. The research we do should have the potential to be applicable – if it does not lead to new theoretical knowledge that has the potential for improving society, there is no use in doing it. It has to seek innovations and opportunities for alternatives. And it should be collaborative: no study of people’s lives should take place without their involvement, so that we don’t turn them into perpetual dependants.

We are working with young people – these are the soldiers, what people call the “lost generation”. We have trained them as PRA practitioners; they are learning new things about the poverty in their own communities. We ask children to tell us themselves how they see their own home environments; they use their own way of talking, they draw pictures, and in this way we learn about what is happening there through their eyes.

We have to work with the traditional ways of behaving in communities; when there are community meetings the men and women sit separately; women do not talk in public meetings, and so on. This is problematic of course, but we can’t challenge it directly if we also want to work in that community. When we engage with communities we find that their priorities are not always the ones that we expected. Then we call in national and provincial government departments, and use our referral system to direct the different community needs to the relevant departments.

Associational life in rural communities is amazing. There are associations of all kinds in the villages, home-based caregivers, a variety of churches, traditional leaders, age-old cultural systems, soccer teams, and so on. When we want a decision to be taken, it is done through the existing associational groups in a community.

After all the PRA and other processes have been completed, with full community involvement, we ask their leadership to sign the agreements for projects that have been identified for implementation. The problem with what we do is that we have been “projectising” communities, trying to turn their lives around one project at a time; we end up with 21 projects, all trying to talk to each other. But we can’t projectise development; we can’t try to enter one dimension of people’s lives at a time. We must solve their problems with them, not for them, and in an integrated way that takes account of the connections between different dimensions of their lives.

Another project we have relates to the youth: the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC). But it is just a stopgap, an attempt to deal with the problems caused by youth who’ve never seen their fathers, who live in problematic home environments. We try to

“The state has power and resources, but not all the resources, not all the power. Communities are never designed by states – government can never claim to do this.”
train them at Further Education and Training colleges so that they can go back and become agents of change in their communities – fix fences, take care of farm animals and so on. But some of them would rather take pleasure in undermining and destroying anything that government is bringing to another community, not their own one. We can’t train them into a different way of thinking and working in the nine months of training that they get; they are not interested in doing disciplined, repetitive work. They just want to live in the bed-and-breakfast accommodation we organise for them, without doing any studying. It is hard to make them implementers of change – but we are not going to give up on this project.

We work on fresh produce projects, introducing intercropping etc.; we’ve worked in Msinga on some of the projects there. And we have other projects that are focusing on wealth creation through fresh produce farming, goat farming, sheep shearing etc. In all these projects we cannot work outside the culture of the communities, we must work within their terms of reference. We want to use communities themselves as their own change agents, to take them back to the village ethos that used to exist. The state has power and resources, but not all the resources, not all the power. Communities are never designed by states – government can never claim to do this. And some of the problems that we face now were created in the universities: what kinds of graduates are they producing, who can’t write a proper sentence? I would like to design a good civil service in a Grade 2 classroom. The problems that we face now in rural development are just a symptom of a bigger malaise in society.

**Post-Presentation Discussion**

*Michael Aliber: We have been talking about how to scale up what very worthwhile NGOs are doing. I see the same question arising in relation to the work that the CRDP is doing: how to scale up the work being done at the pilot sites to a significant level across South Africa? Many of the things that the CRDP is trying to do at pilot sites, perhaps all of them, are already the responsibility of some existing government entity. What I’ve never understood about the CRDP is why it doesn’t conceptualise its job as supporting other spheres of government to carry out their initiatives rather than superimposing a whole lot of extra projects on what is or should be being done?*

*With regard to the failure of land reform projects, we have quite a good idea of what accounts for land reform failure – this is perhaps an example of why it is so difficult for us to have a productive dialogue in terms of policy. The most prominent reason why these projects fail is that we fail to acknowledge that most people who want land want small amounts for land*
tenure security and food security, whereas we treat them the same as the few people who want large amounts of land for commercial farming. This disadvantages both groups, and we end up with very messy projects.

Moshe Swartz: There’s discomfort in the department now that we’ve moved away from commonages – many people who did get title to land sold it back to white farmers. That’s the reality we face. Some of us have said you can’t call it land reform if you just change the colour of the farmer from white to black on a thousand-hectare farm. There are all kinds of land needs – even just land for children to use for playing. In Stellenbosch the municipality has systematically used all space for “going to the bush” for initiation for housing – there is no place for cultural expression. Of course right now jobs, economic development, is the priority. But the Act allows us to use land to cater for a variety of needs.

Francois Lategan: Are we still correct in our argument that a project should be replicable and scalable, given the kinds of successful projects we have been hearing about, and the conditions in which we have to operate? This is something we need to think about.

Jeff Every: It’s not an either/or thing in this country – all the things being done have a place, but they would be much more dynamic in deep rural areas if we didn’t just have a deep rural area with nothing else, no commercial activity – i.e. if we integrated these activities, if the boundaries between commercial and smallholder and deep rural need could become blurred.

Rauri Alcock: What would be useful for a next conference would be for the DRDLR to have thought through how it partners with NGOs or academics or people like those here, who have committed to sharing technology and ideas with them. At the moment it’s very tenuous; sometimes you get people together, sometimes not, even at the Treasury level it’s not clear how to bring people and funds together. You are always cobbled things together bit by bit, personality by personality, and it’s not a useful way to work. There should be an explicit departmental approach to working with other groups in practical partnerships.

MS: I came here with a lot of problems, hoping to find some solutions. I didn’t come with any pre-formulated solutions. But what I can say is that one essential element for turning things around is community leadership, a figure with moral authority in the community.

Ben Cousins: We thank the DRDLR for sending at least one senior person to this action-dialogue. The DG has indicated a real willingness to work in partnership with researchers in the future.

MS: The department is definitely prepared to help fund further discussions like this.
TODAY I WILL BE presenting the extension policy that we have been developing in the Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) since 2012. There were many other people involved in developing the policy, including Kenneth Carden from FoodLab, and the academics present here today who were consulted while the policy was being worked on. The diagram on this page sets out the different phases of the policy development process.

**Phase 1** involved asking ourselves a number of questions about where we come from in terms of extension, and where we are now. We came up with proposals for how to start developing policy – this mainly involved desktop study of the agricultural, forestry and fisheries status quo and led to the production of resource documents to be used in developing new policy. A number of presenters have already stressed the importance of stakeholder consultation in processes of policy development or project design, and this policy is a classic example of that.

Although extension work is not functioning as it should in many respects, as speakers yesterday and today have explained, we do need to acknowledge the initiatives that have been undertaken. In 2005 the first initiative was the Norms and Standards for Extension Advisory Services, which is freely available in book form. In 2008 there was an Extension Indaba in East London. These two initiatives were intended to ‘fix’ extension. There was a third initiative, a profiling report of 2 010 extension officers nationally in the public service. From this report it was clear that the ratio of extension officers to farmers in the country is a problem; it demanded that the department come up with a recruitment drive from the current crop of extension officers, who are not skilled enough – as this action-dialogue has concluded already.

Of the three status quo reports, the one on agriculture is the biggest. In 2009 there was a political decision to combine forestry and fisheries with agriculture; this means that we cannot come up with a policy that talks to agriculture only. In terms of implementing some of the policy interventions that are suggested, this becomes a problem, because agriculture is a concurrent function, and forestry and fisheries are national competences.
When we were developing the policy we looked at where we had come from pre-1994, and also where we had got to between 1994 and 2012. The existing state of extension services was made clear in the presentations given yesterday and this morning. And then we also looked at international standards, to benchmark best practices in other countries such as Brazil, China, India, Kenya and Denmark; Denmark has more farmer-driven extension than the other countries we studied. The criterion for selecting those countries against which to benchmark best practices was that they have extension policies from which we can learn. We also wanted countries that have a similar environment to South Africa, and a blend of forestry and fisheries.

The discussion document we produced based on all this work helped us to move to the next phase of drafting the policy. We also had a Twitter account and an email address, through which we asked for submissions from experts; we received about 24 submissions, which were worked into the discussion document.

**Phase 2** involved research, land policy dialogue and drafting of the policy, as well as consultations with the provinces. The significance of the provinces is that the farmers are there, the extension officers are there, the commodity groups are there. They needed to tell us about their experiences with extension. But we first had one-on-one consultations with each provincial government; they then organised meetings to facilitate our consultation with all the relevant stakeholders in the province. That led to the days of provincial workshops, in late 2012. All those workshops led us to this point, **Phase 3**, where the policy is being drafted.

At each step of this process, from developing the status quo reports onwards, we had a reference group supporting us. Representatives from agricultural unions, farmer groups, interest groups, commodity groups, TechnoServe, Grain SA, and public entities and a number of other groups were part of this reference group. Their role was to give practical guidance on the development of the policy. We went to a third draft of the policy, and then met again with the provinces to do further data collection.

**Key problem areas addressed by the policy**

The policy aims to address these key problem areas identified during Phases 1 and 2:

- Poor linkage between research, extension and producers: there is not enough information coming from R&D to help the extension officers assist farmers in terms of technology developments.
- The low ratio of extension practitioner to producers.

“Extension officers need to be facilitators, and they need to support and advise any farmer, even those with the smallest farms or herds. We need to fix the problem of extension officers only focusing on certain types of farmer.”
Lack of integration of efforts coming from different extension support agencies.
Lack of a national policy and regulatory framework to provide formal guidelines, working standards and a governing code of ethics.
Limitations with the extension education system and a narrow service focus. Extension officers need to be facilitators, and they need to support and advise any farmer, even those with the smallest farms or herds. We need to fix the problem of extension officers only focusing on certain types of farmer.

Aims, goals and objectives of the policy
The overall aims and goals of the policy will be:
- To facilitate establishment of effective and efficient extension and advisory services.
- To ensure knowledge transfer and skills development as the foundation for equitable, productive, competitive, profitable and sustainable agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors growing to the benefit of all South Africans.
- To ensure that all actors in the value chains enjoy equitable and optimum access to knowledge and skills; and have the capacity to explore opportunities for the advancement of their livelihoods and enterprises.
- To respond to users’ expressed economically viable needs, ambitions and circumstances.

The policy objectives are:
- To ensure effective linkages and exchange of information between research, extension services and producers.
- To establish a professional, accessible, reliable, relevant and accountable national extension and advisory service that is results-oriented.
- To ensure a pluralistic and co-ordinated approach for the provision of extension and advisory services by public, private and non-profit organisations.
- To transform and align the core competencies of extension practitioners towards the comprehensive development agenda.
- To promote and implement the value chain approach for integrated and holistic support services.

These policy objectives are a response to the problems we are trying to address, and the policy gap that is there now. The key objective is to promote and integrate a value chain approach for holistic support services. We have had the problem of extension officers advising farmers to produce a crop – for example cabbages – and then the farmer who has produced 20 000 heads of cabbage isn’t able to market them. We need a cadre of

“The key [policy] objective is to promote and integrate a value chain approach for holistic support services.”
Principal Components for a commodity systems assessment

Priority Components for Problem Analysis

extension officers that can assist farmers through the value chain. The diagram alongside gives an indication of the approach we will be taking in analysing and responding to problems at different points in the value chain.

Key policy principles

The policy is underpinned by the following principles:

- **Poverty eradication** – making an effective contribution to national efforts of poverty eradication; food and nutrition security for all.
- **Equity** – access for all actors in the agricultural, forestry and fisheries value chains.
- **Prioritising production and income opportunities** – the services must stimulate production and income opportunities.
- **Promoting sustainability** – extension and advisory services must promote socially acceptable, economically viable and environmentally friendly development practices.
- **Pluralistic and integrated services** – ensuring combined extension and advisory services capacity through partnerships, collaboration and integration between actors.
- **Trustworthiness, integrity and efficiency** – services must be trustworthy and uphold integrity and professionalism through the provision of scientifically proven and ethically defensible advice, while ensuring effective and efficient services.
- **Strong links between research, extension and producers** – research must respond to producers’ expressed economically viable needs, ambitions and circumstances.

There is no acknowledgement in the public service of other extension support services, for example those offered by the projects at this action-dialogue – we are not working together with them, we are working in silos. If we don’t work together we won’t be able to solve the problem of the poor ratio of extension services to farmers. The policy also recognises that modern strategy for extension and advisory services is pluralistic, acknowledging that there are roles for the state, the private sector, NGOs and for producers themselves in delivering services.

In developing the new policy we are also recognising the **policy context** – i.e. that the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors are also supported and otherwise influenced by the policies and work of various other state departments and agencies, for example those relating to rural development, recapitalisation, land reform, etc. Rather than promoting simple adoption, a key outcome of any engagement with extension and advisory services is to share knowledge and strengthen individual and collective capacity.
Effective and efficient linkage mechanisms need to be created between research, extension and producers by means of:

- design of participatory and integrated institutional structures that bring together extension, research and producers at national, provincial and district levels;
- design of user-friendly ICT knowledge-sharing platforms, such as social networks, to effect mass communication amongst actors, which also ensures free accessibility to research outcomes;
- facilitation of demand-driven research and extension services, promotion of action-based and producer-led research processes, and support for programmes based on participatory on-farm trials and research station-based research processes, to ensure inclusion of producers and extension practitioners in all research processes;
- organisation of smallholder producers into commodity groups to ensure that they have a voice in all research processes;
- development of a multilingual approach to support the dissemination of information, in order to enable open access to information by all actors across the value chain;
- promotion of the adoption of locally viable technologies and indigenous knowledge systems by producers.

### National Extension Coordinating Structure

The diagram below indicates how extension services will be coordinated across local, provincial and national levels of government.

“There is no acknowledgement in the public service of other extension support services, for example those offered by the projects at this action-dialogue – we are not working together with them, we are working in silos.”
The policy... recognises that modern strategy for extension and advisory services is pluralistic, acknowledging that there are roles for the state, the private sector, NGOs and for producers themselves in delivering services.”

We are trying to create space for extension services, including non-governmental services, to play a role in extending these services to all farmers, including small-scale and smallholder farmers. At national level we have come up with the terms of reference of this structure and have already met with some of the stakeholders.

Specific policy intervention measures are set out in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy intervention measure</th>
<th>Core policy actions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved access to quality extension and advisory service</td>
<td>Recruit competent extension practitioners to augment the current human capital.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Certify and ensure the competence of extension professionals through registration with a recognised and credible professional body.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitate a pluralistic and integrated approach to provide extension and advisory services</td>
<td>Identify and establish pluralistic and integrated extension and advisory services partnerships with private and non-profit organisations (at national, provincial and local levels).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advance the extension education system and broaden service focus</td>
<td>Review and develop a multidisciplinary training curriculum for extension practitioners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure continuous professional development through systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of knowledge and skills, and development of personal qualities necessary for the execution of professional and technical duties of extension practitioners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote commodity value chain development approach</td>
<td>Integrate marketing and value chain aspects into extension and advisory services activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extension practitioners must become champions of the value chain approach to integrate comprehensive value chain aspects into farming operations.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support market access opportunities for producers (especially smallholders) by negotiating for marketing outlets including preferential procurement opportunities by state agencies.</td>
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**POST-PRESENTATION DISCUSSION**

*Francois Lategan:* You said that extension is a provincial function, whereas policy is a national initiative, and never the twain shall meet at this stage. How are you going to change this so that your policy becomes relevant at provincial level? And how will you ensure buy-in at provincial level to the national policy?

*Tozamile Lukhalo:* All provinces participated in the process of developing the policy – not only officials but also farmers and other stakeholder groups. In terms of implementation, the policy stipulates that each province should have a directorate on extension or farmer support; some provinces don’t have such a department or directorate at present. We want each province to have a strategy that will be aligned with the implementation of the national policy, which is more generic in nature. Each province must indicate how it is going to implement this policy at provincial level.

*FL:* How will you enforce this?

*TL:* We will monitor the implementation. And it is not only a DAFF policy, it is going to Cabinet for approval at that level, so that it has teeth to deal with anyone who doesn’t comply.

*Jeff Every:* There’s a gap here in the practical sense. I don’t see the commercial support structure in any of the things we’re talking about. We do a lot of this support just because we are dealing with farmers all the time, helping them with simple farm bookkeeping and accounting, VAT issues, income tax issues. Small co-ops are being nailed by SARS for non-compliance, and they are not in a position financially to pay an accountant for services to get these matters dealt with correctly. There is no support structure for these small farmers to deal with these issues; we do it *pro bono* just because we happen to be there.

*Ben Cousins:* Are you saying extension officers should provide advice on tax returns?

*JE:* It’s not an extension function in the true sense, but you can’t be sitting in South Africa and saying that you’re helping them if you don’t provide this kind of service that is subsidised to some degree, because they can’t pay a commercial rate for it. That service doesn’t exist.

*BC:* That’s a very good example of lack of fit between the needs on the ground and what’s available for farmers.

*Anold Derembwe:* You said you have 2 010 extension officers [in DAFF]. Is there a deliberate move to persuade people into extension services as a profession? What incentives are there?

*TL:* After we did the count of extension officers, we developed an extension recovery plan with a

“All provinces participated in the process of developing the policy – not only officials but also farmers and other stakeholder groups.”
number of objectives. One of the key objectives is recruitment and training of extension officers. There are now 2 500 extension officers because of that intervention, and the number is still increasing.

Brigid Letty: What does the policy see as the viable ratio of extension staff to farmers – what is a realistic ratio? There is no way that extension staff can meet the needs of 2.5 million small-scale farmers.

TL: One key point that we need to remember is that the ratio we are talking about now only refers to public service extension officers. There was no integration at that point with other extension services. There are other non-government entities serving farmers that also have their own extension officers. There is a recommendation in terms of numbers in the Norms and Standards document, but it differs in terms of commodity – for crops for example it says 1 extension officer to 500 farmers; it will be different for livestock farmers. But the issue is also how we make use of extension officers – for example, how many are needed per ward, depending on the farmers in that ward.

FL: Concerning the issue of professional service provision, in the policy document you do recognise the continuum of production systems, that is something we must acknowledge. Last week SACNASP [the South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions] submitted a request to SAQA for registration as a professional body. The implication of this request is that if you are in an advisory capacity, and you are in a natural sciences profession – which extension officers are – then the issue of registration is going to arise. It’s a question of accountability in advisory capacities. In the policy, is it considered to be an important aspect of the eventual professional service to have professional registration, or do you only define it in terms of code of practice?

TL: It’s the first intervention in the Policy Implementation Measures: certify and ensure competence of extension professionals through registration with the recognised professional body. So it’s part of the policy. Extension Science has been approved as a field of practice by SACNASP, and it has also been gazetted, approved by the Minister as the custodian of science and technology. This week, the current crop of extension officers that we have, depending on their qualification and experience, will be registering in about five different categories. We have put aside R5.5 million for their registration fees and subscriptions for this year. From the next financial year they subscribe on their own.

FL: Do you have a programme in your policy for ongoing professional development?

TL: Yes we do.

“Small co-ops are being nailed by SARS for non-compliance, and they are not in a position financially to pay an accountant for services to get these matters dealt with correctly. There is no support structure for these small farmers to deal with these issues...”
**Farmer support programmes: why, what are they, and how can they be implemented?**

Nick Vink
Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Stellenbosch

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**Farm size and efficiency**

When it comes to the vexing issue of farm size and efficiency, agricultural economists fall broadly into two groups. Those who work with farmers and farming in the developed countries believe that there are few scale economies\(^{15}\) in primary production, but that a farm cannot be smaller than its ability to provide the farmer with a remuneration that is aligned with what she or he can earn outside of farming. In South Africa this translated to a producers' remuneration of around R300 000 per year. The minimum farm size can then be deduced from this figure, depending on the location of the farm, the resources at its disposal and the commodities being produced. However, these economists also believe that farms will get bigger over time as the more efficient farm managers make sufficient profits to buy out those who cannot earn their keep in farming. This does not mean that the whole of agriculture will end up as one farm, as some farmers will be farming part-time, or some family members who contribute to household income (e.g. a spouse, or adult child) will work elsewhere, or older farmers start to wind down their operations as they enter retirement. In all these cases farm sizes will get smaller. Nevertheless, these economists expect that average farm size will increase over time – the debates are by how much and over what period this will occur. The reason this happens, it is believed, is not necessarily that the larger farmers are better farm managers, but that large farms have better access to input and output markets. They can buy fertiliser, seeds and chemicals, etc. in bulk, they get better credit ratings from the bank, they have better access to product markets because they better understand the technicalities of modern markets such as futures exchanges and contractual relationships, and so forth. The bigger they get, the bigger these non-farm

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\(^{15}\) This means that the farm must be large enough to afford the capital equipment required for production – for example a tractor and a combine harvester for a grain farm, irrigation equipment and vineyards/orchards for a fruit farm, etc. When a farm is too small, it is believed, efficient production is not possible.
advantages become.

At the other end of the spectrum are those economists, mostly working with developing country agriculture, who also believe that there are few scale economies in agriculture, but do not believe that there is a minimum efficient size because lumpy capital items such as tractors can be hired rather than bought, while capital items such as irrigation equipment are not necessary given that a farmer can use flood irrigation rather than mechanical means. Furthermore, they argue that these farms are more efficient than large, corporately managed farms because they don’t hire labour, they use family labour. Because the family has a stake in the profitability of the farm there will be no shirking, and so family-operated farms will be more efficient than large-scale farms. This argument has a long history in the writings of economists, and results in an almost mystical belief, following Thomas Jefferson, in the sanctity of the family farm. This family farm is invariably a small-scale operation (although the definition of ‘small’ is context-specific) and it probably does not provide sustenance for the family in question, although a lot of time and effort is spent by researchers and policy makers on recommending ways in which these farms can become self-sufficient or even surplus-producing.

It is very difficult to remain neutral in this debate. However, it is important for the task at hand to be aware of three stylised facts:

1. Family farms need not be small, so most of the commercial farmers in South Africa are not that different from those family farms, principally in the former homelands, where farming is conducted on a scale larger than the back yard. The principal difference is the fact that the commercial farmers use more hired than family labour (but both use some hired and some family labour).

2. Large farms that are corporately managed have problems of their own, which arise principally from the conflict of interest between the owners and managers, a problem that does not arise on large family-owned and operated farms.

3. The extent to which corporately owned and managed farms have penetrated primary production varies from country to country, while farms tend to get larger in all countries. The basic contrast in this regard is between the USA, where 80% of farm production comes from 20% of the farms (and the largest 1% of farms dominates production) and the EU countries, where there are still proportionately many more family-owned and operated farms, large and small.

The central argument of this short paper is that the structure of South African agriculture will rapidly come to reflect that of the USA rather than that of the EU if the state does not
provide farmer support services. The main reason for this contention is that farming businesses cannot survive without access to markets for goods and services for the inputs they require for production, and to commodity markets in order to sell surpluses. When this support is not made available by the state, farmers have to provide it for themselves, and/or it has to be provided by the private sector. The implication is that the large farms have more favourable access to input and produce markets and will get larger at an accelerating pace, and small farms will be at a perpetual disadvantage in the market. By contrast, where the state does provide farmer support services, small-scale farmers will be in a better position to decide whether, where and at what scale they want to farm.

**Farmer support services**

Governments all over the world support agriculture: the literature shows that when farmers are supported by the state, the country in question usually produces surpluses, and has an excess of exports over imports. Furthermore, as countries become wealthier, they often switch from taxing agriculture to supporting the sector, and the country then becomes a net exporter. The ‘Asian tigers’ of the 1960s and 1970s (Taiwan, South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia) are good examples, while some African countries (Zambia, Malawi) are currently undergoing the same transition. On the other hand, when countries tax agriculture, they are invariably also net food importers, except in the case of Argentina, which levies substantial export taxes but still produces a surplus.

Historically, South Africa supported commercial farmers, who were then able to produce a surplus, and suppressed black farmers, who were then not able to contribute to surplus production in the country in any meaningful way. The extent of this support is shown in Figure 1. The support reached its peak in the first half of the 1980s and declined after that. In the period 1980–85, therefore, 30% of commercial farmers’ income was derived directly from taxpayers or indirectly from consumers. This was a level of support comparable with that of competitor countries, but of course far less affordable for South Africa because of our much lower per capita GDP.

For the purposes of this paper, government support to agriculture consists of four categories of support:

1. General support (‘green box’ support as defined in the World Trade Organisation negotiations), which consists of items such as research and development, extension services, basic infrastructure (roads, rail, irrigation works, electricity, etc.).
2. Direct cash subsidies. In South Africa, this has included subsidies for conservation works (contouring, drainage, fencing, building dams, etc.), disaster management (debt write-
offs, provision of animal feeds), access to finance (interest rate subsidies), consumer subsidies (such as those in place for bread and maize), etc.

3. Protection from foreign competition. This was normally done through direct controls (export and import monopolies, the accreditation of agents in export markets, etc.) until the signing of the Marrakech Agreement when the tariff equivalents of these intervention measures were calculated, and then subjected to agreed reductions.

4. Interventions in the domestic market, largely accomplished by means of the Marketing Act and ancillary legislation for the wine, sugar, ostrich, wattle bark and other industries.

"... it is common cause that the extension services are not functioning, and that little research that addresses the specific needs of smaller-scale farmers has been done."

Source: Kirsten et al., 2008.

**Figure 1: The nominal rate of assistance to agriculture in South Africa, 1960–2005**

In the pre- and post-1994 period, each of these forms of support was affected by the democratisation of the country:

1. It is clear that insufficient attention has been given to the provision of infrastructure in the areas where most black farmers operate, while little has been done to ensure that the infrastructure in the areas of land reform has been adapted to suit the specific needs of smaller-scale, less experienced farmers. Furthermore it is common cause that the extension services are not functioning, and that little research that addresses the specific needs of smaller-scale farmers has been done.
2. There was some expectation that this direct support would remain as part of the budget of the national and provincial Departments of Agriculture, and that they would be skewed to favour new black farmers. Unfortunately, virtually all of these have been removed from the budget of the Department, and where they are available it is to a narrowly defined group (e.g. the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) which is accessible only to land reform participants).

3. The Agreement on Agriculture, which was part of the Marrakech Agreement, was negotiated and ratified by the former regime, with South Africa classifying itself as a developed country. This meant that substantial concessions were made in terms of tariff reductions. When the new government came into power, however, many tariffs were lowered to levels far below the WTO-bound tariffs in an attempt to simplify the management of the tariff regime.

4. When the deregulation of South African agriculture is discussed in public debate, most commentators think of the deregulation of the Control Boards that were set up to ‘manage’ the markets for specific agricultural commodities under the Marketing Act. These were abolished by means of the new Marketing of Agricultural Products Act of 1996. There were also other avenues of state intervention in agricultural markets prior to 1994 which included direct legislation (e.g. the control over the sugar industry, controls over the road transport industry, controls over informal food markets), other forms of enabling legislation (the KWV legislation in the wine industry, the Co-operatives Act and the protection it gave to the ostrich industry), etc. Virtually all of these forms of intervention were swept away in the post-1994 period.

There is sufficient evidence to show that the demise of the forms of market intervention referred to in point 4 above was to the benefit of the agricultural sector, and of most commercial farmers. Furthermore, there is also sufficient evidence to show that these forms of intervention invariably end up benefiting larger farmers over smaller farmers, even where they are targeted at specific groups of farmers as was the case in South Africa. Their demise need not be mourned, as there is little evidence that they would have benefited the average black farmer. However, the demise of the other three forms of support to farmers (points 1–3), and the fact that the opportunity to redirect them to the benefit of new and emerging black farmers across the spectrum has disappeared, is cause for concern.

What we got instead of the building of a comprehensive farmer support system was a series of attempts to provide support to new black farmers . . . None of these piecemeal attempts have come close to replacing what had been in place for commercial farmers during the 1980s.”
as “central to and a vital driving force of a process of rural reconstruction and development” but “refer[red] rather scantily to agricultural issues and did not highlight agricultural development” (Van Rooyen et al., 1994).

- The Broadening of Access to Agriculture Thrust (BATAT), conceived as early as 1994, which did focus on agricultural development in the context of the RDP and was “intended to kick-start a shift away from white dominance in agriculture, and attempted to assess the needs of black agriculture – existing and new – black farmers, and identify development priorities and strategies to improve their access to agriculture” (Oettle et al., 1998).

- When it became evident that BATAT was not working, remedial action in the form of the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) was proposed “[to] enhance the provision of support services to promote and facilitate agricultural development targeting beneficiaries of the Land Reform and Agrarian Reforms programmes” (Minister, 2004). Whereas BATAT was aimed at ‘black farmers’ in general, CASP was specifically targeted at land reform beneficiaries. It has been argued that the central weakness of BATAT was that it was an initiative of the National Department of Agriculture, which had little line function responsibility for the elements of farmer support, given that implementation lay with the provinces (Oettle et al., 1998). This could explain why the design of CASP combined funding from the national department with implementation at the provincial sphere.

None of these piecemeal attempts have come close to replacing what had been in place for commercial farmers during the 1980s.

The implementation of Farmer Support Services
The elements of the agri-support system that farmers require can be summarised as follows:

1. Rights – this includes but is not restricted to land rights:
   - Land rights are more important for smaller farmers, especially for those in the communal areas and for land reform beneficiaries.
   - Security of tenure or flexibility in land markets does not always take the form of private property rights, and innovative ways of securing the rights of farmers will be sought.
   - Farm worker rights are also an important element, and a better balance will be found between their rights and requirements of small and large farmers who depend on hired workers.
   - Also rights to markets (export licences, etc.).

“Farm worker rights are also an important element, and a better balance will be found between their rights and requirements of small and large farmers who depend on hired workers.”
2. Market access for all farmers, for all commodities and for all parts of the country: phase in as an ongoing process.
3. Access to inputs through innovative programmes that learn the lessons of success from such programmes in Malawi, Zambia and elsewhere in Africa.
4. Programmes to support human capital, including school, tertiary education institutions, learnerships, mentorships, etc.
5. Technology development and transfer systems that build on the historically strong ability of South African agriculture to adapt technologies to our circumstances.
6. A biosafety regulatory framework that works to the benefit of consumers and of smaller farmers as a first priority.
7. An institutional framework that supports access to inputs, market access, biosafety, research and development, social services for farm workers, etc.
8. Physical infrastructure to make these support systems possible. This includes the roads, the railways and the ports, water and electricity access for farm workers, and access to irrigation, etc.
9. Smart subsidies and smart support to key industries as part of the job creation strategy.

It is well known that during the 1980s the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) implemented a Farmer Support Programme (FSP) in the former homelands. The experience gained there, as well as with the support to commercial farmers, sets strong pointers to direct the design and implementation of new interventions to serve small-scale farmers in South Africa. The most important lessons were:

- **A vacuum was left due to the demise of focused, coordinated and comprehensive small farmer support service programmes.** The inability to set a pro-active system in place after 1994 to integrate South Africa’s ‘two agricultures’ as well as the virtual falling away of effective small farmer support systems left a vacuum in most rural areas of the former homelands.
- **The importance of coherence and focus in farmer support policy frameworks, funding programmes and implementation processes.** The FSP was a good example of a coherent set of policies, funding programmes and governance processes, all focused on small-farmer support programmes. Coherent policy and project design criteria, together with a consistent and focused funding programme, will direct and enable implementing agencies to generate “tipping points”, resulting in a critical mass of action and outcomes. The current vacuum left in the supply of small farmer support systems and services, in particular in the previous homelands, clearly calls for such a substantive, coherent,
proactive and well implemented intervention.

- **The importance of structured participative processes in policy development and in programme/project design, monitoring and evaluation.** A third observation, relevant to structured design, monitoring and evaluation of such interventions as the FSP, emerges from the process followed to pilot the FSP approach, to monitor outcomes, and to evaluate the programme. The DBSA Farmer Support Evaluation was commissioned in 1992/3 by the independent DBSA Evaluation Unit, and built on an ongoing participative monitoring and “interim internal” evaluation process. This formal evaluation process (documented by Singini and Van Rooyen, 1995) was quite a unique occurrence for that time. Any future intervention of this nature should endeavour to mobilise a group of knowledgeable opinion leaders to participate in policy development, design, monitoring and evaluation processes. Beneficiary groups should be included in such processes: farmers, community leaders, and business people. Women participants should be accommodated as they are by far the majority of small farmers. Local societies such as saving clubs and stokvels will also be important, together with all relevant community stakeholders. Planning and facilitation processes will have to be both structured and informal. This will require the application of methods such as logical framework/objective-oriented planning and rapid rural appraisal and monitoring.

- **Expanding the farmer support concept: what type of farming development model and support schemes for today?** Since the 1990s a range of development models have emerged in South Africa and elsewhere to link smallholder farmers through business models – contracting, out growers, equity and shareholding – into the general commercial agricultural support system. Where the required support services and elements were provided effectively, successes were recorded (Van Rooyen et al., 2010; Mabaya et al., 2011). Agribusiness enterprises are also increasingly involved as strategic partners in land reform projects i.e. through the Proactive Acquisition of Land Scheme (PLAS) (Van Rooyen, et al., 2010; Mabaya, et al., 2011). Such settlement project-type interventions can readily be designed, with little adjustment, along the principles and criteria of the FSP. New services such as quality control and traceability measures, supply chain management and product insurance schemes may be required. The funding package may also differ and co-funding for such initiatives would be most likely. The funding mechanism therefore will need adjustment. However, smallholders in the former homeland areas are generally not included in these “commercialisation” development models and remain largely neglected as extension services, funding support and infrastructure have effectively broken down (Van Niekerk, et al., 2011).

- **Making FSPs more user friendly.** An important bottleneck experienced with the DBSA’s
FSPs was the perceived rigidity of project descriptions. This complicated the type of adjustments necessary in farming practice due to changing weather patterns and related seasonal differences. Market and price fluctuations, especially after deregulation, also need flexibility in funding and compliance arrangements. These, combined with clear accountability and governance procedures and accurate farm information and business intelligence, and supported by monitoring systems, will be required in future initiatives. This will also apply to accommodating the many ‘new’ farmer support models.

- **Access to farm land and property rights.** Access to farm land remains a problem, despite the changes in land ownership arrangements since the 1990s. Lack of production rights to land restricted productive farming in areas served by FSPs. Land purchase is currently still not possible under communal tenure systems, and the lack of tenure security constrains the willingness and ability of farmers to invest in land improvements and to expand growing businesses. Smallholders are therefore generally trapped on too small landholdings with too little development capital. Land reform transfers also do not provide sufficient access for black farmers. While land ownership is the preferred option, it is not a necessary condition for the commercialisation of agriculture; alternative arrangements such as rental agreements of sufficiently long duration to justify investment could also be viewed as an alternative mechanism. Urban land development plans should also provide for smallholder production.

- **(Re)structuring the institutional support framework.** During the evaluation of the FSP it was noted that the institutional framework to support FSPs was underdeveloped, primarily in terms of the quality and choice of implementing agents. Farming communities served by a FSP in those days had to accept ‘development corporations’ as implementing agents; government departments and NGOs were seldom used due to the accountancy and compliance requirements and politics of the time. Interesting contractual link-ups with commercial agribusinesses and co-operatives to act as implementing agents were, however, explored during that era. The Sheila-Mooifontein FSP in Bophuthatswana was successfully implemented by NWK, a large agricultural co-operative, under an agency agreement with the local development corporation Agrikor (Van Rooyen, et al., 2010). A number of sugar FSPs were also implemented by sugar milling companies acting as agents of the KwaZulu Government Service.

The current agri-support service environment differs greatly from that of 1985–1994. The free market dictates production activity and locality, agribusiness firms have consolidated and provisions such as the AgriBEE Codes and Scorecard have been accepted (Mabaya, et al., 2011; Van Rooyen et al., 2010). Furthermore, provincial governments have
agricultural development responsibilities while municipalities are also positioned to play an active role in structuring services for small-scale agriculture. However, some of the major constraints of the FSPs were the weakness in local, community-level institutions in regard to mobilising and participating in programme design and implementation. This often created ownership and accountability problems. Currently, institutional weakness at provincial and local levels jeopardise the ability to implement FSPs successfully. Hence an institutional structure linking government functions at national, provincial and municipal levels to agribusiness support will be necessary to reach more farmers with FSPs.

- **Planning frameworks and assessment methodologies: creating a useful toolkit.** The FSP strategy was strongly methodology-orientated. This assisted management through the various stages of the project cycle – identification, design, appraisal, and implementation, and various techniques were employed during the different phases of the cycle. Economic Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) was positioned as the dominant framework for design and decision-making by the DBSA. ‘Shadow pricing’ and economic analysis to complement financial assessment were necessary because of the distorted nature of the South African agricultural economy at that time. However, a greater emphasis on participation will require the application of user friendly methods and techniques such as logical framework planning/objective-oriented intervention planning and multi-criteria analysis, together with rapid rural appraisal techniques. The need to understand and accommodate diversity in planning will also necessitate the application of typology analysis.

**References**


“Urban land development plans should also provide for smallholder production.”


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**Post-Presentation Discussion**

*Louise de Klerk:* Where have you identified pockets of success? In Mpumalanga we also know all the failed projects, but there must be some that are successful.

*Nick Vink:* I’ve been involved in evaluations in the Western Cape, and there are some relative successes there in fruit share equity schemes, vegetable farmers who are winning farming business awards, businesses that have been sustained over a few years. We need to write up the success stories. Farming is a three-generation story, so you don’t really know what the successes are until you aren’t there any more.

*Francois Lategan:* Over the past few days we’ve seen the context coming up again and again. We know the different approaches that government is trying to implement through its policies; it’s a huge capital-intensive exercise. Many private sector enterprises have tried to support the system, but we constantly hear of conflicts where objectives that were initially aligned start to diverge, as new realities emerge such as cash pressures. How do you think policy should be streamlined to make provision for private enterprise that wants to support this process?

*NV:* My point of departure is that we can’t fix what we’ve got at the moment by making it more efficient – what we’re doing at the moment is just wrong, and gets more bizarre as time goes by. We need to change the whole system. We need to change the structure of the commercial farming sector and at the same time put support services into the old bantustan areas. We need to focus on support services; the land issue will sort itself out. That’s an economist talking, but I make no excuse for this. It doesn’t mean you leave the land issue alone; you concentrate on providing support services, find out where people need land rights and make sure that they get the rights they need. Having targets of 30% or whatever never made sense to me. I’ve been talking to different farmer groups and one of the things I’ve told all of them is that we’re sitting with the worst of two worlds at the moment. The Department of Land Affairs thinks the
**“There is no blanket answer to the question of what the role of the state is, or the community. . . It’s a case-by-case matter, working out what support different types of farmers need to supply different markets that exist at district and municipality level.”**

Department of Agriculture is encroaching on their territory; the Department of Agriculture thinks Land Affairs is from a different planet and is starting to encroach. One of these days they’re going to end up swopping tasks, with the wrong people doing the wrong things.

*Kenneth Carden*: Are you saying that concentration should be on support programmes? The discussion over the last couple of days here has been about how to scale up the initiatives people have been describing. How do we do this?

*Ben Cousins*: If you’re saying these are the six or seven programmes that should be done, which of these should government be doing, and which should other agents be doing, and how can we build in complementarity? And how can we build in informal markets such as bakkie traders that at present get no support whatsoever? Can we build in differentiated support?

*NV*: Yes, you have to create differentiated forms of support. I have a couple of colleagues who are doing work on the red meat market, and it seems that a large proportion of middle class people (i.e. white people) are buying their red meat on the informal market; farmers are farming and slaughtering the sheep, but consuming it as well. There is no blanket answer to the question of what the role of the state is, or the community etc. The school feeding schemes feed about 11 million children every day, and it’s the perfect captive market. You could start imagining what sort of structures could be put in place for reliable supply systems so that small-scale farmers can meet those food needs. It’s a case-by-case matter, working out what support different types of farmers need to supply different markets that exist at district and municipality level.

*FL*: It’s an important point, but do you know how destructive implementation is? At Fort Hare we wanted to access school feeding schemes in the Eastern Cape that are worth R800 million per annum. In the year that we were supposed to sign the agreement to do this, the MEC changed the system so that each principal has to sign the agreement with the supplier.

*Jeff Every*: With regard to school feeding and the dairy farms, a lot of schools buy their milk straight from farms. Some of the farms don’t have pasteurising facilities; and many SMMEs don’t want to pasteurise because their customers don’t have fridges. Pasteurised milk goes off whereas unpasteurised milk goes to maas and can still be consumed. Those are the kinds of dilemmas that dairy farms face, caught between first and second world markets. Another issue is that a lot of emerging farmers that have been given a dairy herd of 100–200 cows have no form of support whatsoever from extension officers, who don’t have the experience and practical knowledge to help these farmers – they can just quote from books when farmers ask them to help solve a practical problem.
NV: We need smart subsidies to get this kind of support going again. Trains used to run past every farm, pick up cans of cream from the day’s milking and take it to the co-op in the area. That’s what a smart subsidy is.

BC: There’s a rapidly growing market for fresh produce; the question of irrigation for fresh produce smallholder farmers is at the centre of the national debate. Can you comment on that?

NV: We went to every single agricultural industry and asked by how much they could expand production without disrupting their key market within the time horizon of the National Development Plan, which is 20 years. After much back and forth discussion between us and the farmers we came up with a figure of 145 000 hectares. At the same time we started talking to the Department of Water Affairs, which said there is a million hectares available to be irrigated. We started working out with them where that million hectares was, and we went public with this information – at which point they denied ever having said there was a million hectares available. The problem is that there is no one in the Department who wants to build dams. The water is available. At present there are 1.5 million hectares under irrigation, and we produce 33% of our total production off that land – all the fruit and vegetables, 5–10% of the maize crop, 10–15% of the wheat crop, 50% of the barley crop, virtually all the lucerne.

Wim van Averbeke: And yet in the Eastern Cape agriculture doesn’t seem to be taking off, if you listen to the presentations that have been made at this action-dialogue.

NV: Doing agriculture is a 2–3 generation process; the success won’t be visible early on. People need to be given access to land, the irrigation systems need to be put in place for them over time, and then it will build up slowly, over 20 years.

BC: One more question about your statement in the paper that 30% of produce comes from the top 20% of farmers – the implication is that 80% of farmers don’t produce very much. Even if we exclude the dry areas of the country, that means you could replace tens of thousands of farmers with land reform beneficiaries, with very little risk to national food security. My suggestion is that we raise the target to 70–80% of commercial farmers, and the question then is how do we do that effectively?

FL: Is too much expectation put on government support? Traditionally around the world, what drives agricultural development is private investment.

BC: We are coming back to the question of what government can appropriately do, using taxpayers’ money.

“People need to be given access to land, the irrigation systems need to be put in place for them over time, and then it will build up slowly, over 20 years.”
**PART IV – KEY ISSUES TO TAKE FORWARD**

Day 3 of the action-dialogue was devoted to identification and discussion of key issues that had been raised throughout the presentations on the first two days. A summary of these issues was presented by Michael Aliber, and is given in full below. This was followed by presentations on two other issues of significance for government policy that aims to address the needs of the small-scale farming sector: water availability and agricultural data. Summaries of these three presentations are included in this section.

**KEY ISSUES**

*Michael Aliber*

**What’s the question?**
- Agree: how to support rural livelihoods through agriculture at a bigger scale and more effectively
- Not so clear: relationship of this pursuit to food security and rural development – need for further discussion/reflection? The linkages haven’t come into sharp focus yet.

**Who are we wanting to support?**
- Agree: a broad diversity/range of small-scale farmers, from ‘subsistence’ to ‘commercial’
- Concern: over-focus on ‘commercial’? Government support tends to gravitate towards this.
- Disagree: do we need to categorise/classify? We accept that there is diversity – do we need boxes and labels?
- Observation: there’s an emotional repugnance to classifying, and lack of common understand as to why to classify
  - Assigning people to categories simplifies reality, also echoes the divisiveness of apartheid; versus
  - We need ways of understanding our diverse ‘clientele’ so as to ensure fairer and more effective strategies, also to better understand the issue of mobility
- Not discussed: urban/peri-urban dwellers

**Vision of change**
- Agree: we want to allow and promote voluntary ‘upward mobility’ in respect of individual farmers, but not according to a strict idea of a ladder of progression, nor
necessarily from informal to formal

- Concern: commercialisation should not be presumed to be the common goal, and may not be an appropriate idea at all in communal areas in respect of livestock?
- Not discussed: is there a need to help more people/households become subsistence producers?

**Conceptualising farmers’ ‘ability’**

- Agree: rural individuals have capacity to learn, experiment, innovate, teach, collaborate (where appropriate)...
- Key distinction: some formal markets so competitive on quality (e.g. flowers and vegetables) that stringent ‘systems’ are necessary to compensate for a low skill base, but immersion in such systems also builds skills, albeit in a particular way

**Youth**

- Agree: a big concern that youth are not getting involved in farming, but there is hope
- Disagree: how much hope, and in what way; e.g. where money is concerned? As traders and service providers, rather than farmers?
- This issue merits more focused attention and discussion.

**Markets**

- Agree: wide range of market opportunities to be promoted, e.g. formal and informal, local and non-local; should also consider upstream and downstream market players, including informal; some concern that we tend to overlook the local and the informal
- Agree: options and opportunities are very activity/product-specific; difficult to generalise
- Concern: government has tendency to over-emphasise promoting access to formal markets
- Concern: a much larger and more productive smallholder sector will compete for domestic market space
- Concern: confusion re terminology – ‘commercialisation’ often taken to mean formalisation, too limiting – could mean producing for purpose of selling informally to neighbours, not only to access non-local formal markets
- Not discussed: what to do in response to the concern about competing for domestic market space (cf Brazil ‘model’: the small-scale family farm sector produces the majority of what is consumed in the local market, the large-scale farms produce mainly for export)
Role of innovation
- Agree: innovation can play an important role, in terms of both technologies and development approaches
- Observation: some development approaches regard farmer-led innovation as central; others embed innovation in the overall system (e.g. Timbali Incubators and the Village Link Person, among many examples!); some do both; and in others innovation not relevant

Development strategies
- Agree: there are multiple approaches, no ‘silver bullet’ commodities; diversity is good, should be promoted
- Agree: ‘working with what’s there’ and listening to what people want are important principles
- Concern: don’t apply this principle too rigidly – what’s wrong with encouraging (but not inflicting) something new? Do people always know what they need?
- Concern: is the embrace of plurality happening at the cost of coherence? Is there a coordination function? By what means and involving whom?
- Disagree: the role of Projects/projects (see below)

Projects/projects
- Agree: we need systematic/programmatic ways of supporting farmers and promoting change; call these ‘Projects’? ‘Programmes’? ‘Schemes’?
- Agree: producer co-ops generally not a good way to go, but co-operation is often key; the issue here is promoting agency
- Disagree: the role of projects, i.e. enterprise-level interventions, often group-based though not always co-ops
- Distinction: some initiatives have interesting mix of principles – project framework but with individual responsibility (e.g. Timbali) linked to individual reward

Scalability/replicability
- Agree: we are far from where we want to be in terms of the overall reach of our efforts, but there is a lot of potential
- Disagree: what the strategy is to address this. Possibilities:
  - Encourage more people to do more (‘national service’)
  - Identify initiatives (e.g. by civil society) that government can take over and scale up
  - Identify initiatives (e.g. by civil society) that government can fund so that someone
else (e.g. civil society) can scale up

- Find and support initiatives that have potential for self-replicating (autopoiesis) – as has been done in Asia
- Improve core support functions (e.g. extension) and make environment more conducive to the small-scale sector

Observation: these are not mutually exclusive, but because they are poorly articulated, we don’t have a clear over-arching strategy of any kind

Roles of government

- Agree: government is central, especially because it has the resources (also the responsibility), money and people
- Agree: partnerships are good, can take many different forms
- General concerns about government: politicisation; uneven work ethic and skills; lack of tolerance for experimentation; inflexibility (e.g. with regard to handling money); inability to self-correct; wasteful expenditure
- Concerns with regard to scaling up: when government sees a good approach and tries to scale it up, approach tends to get corrupted; why?
- Question: how to improve use and allocation of government resources?
- Question: how to integrate a small-scale farmer strategy within broader discussion of agricultural policies such as those referred to in Nick Vink’s paper, e.g. trade policy, subsidies, regulation, etc?
- Question: can government become a learning organisation? How best to build on NGO learnings?

Roles of civil society

- Agree: accounts for fair share of delivery, at cutting edge of finding innovative approaches
- Question: can government support the innovation role of civil society in a genuine way? NGOs sometimes have to pretend they are not interested in innovation to get government support.
- Question: how will ‘collaborative extension’ work in practice?

Importance of context

- Agree: context very important, but relates differently to different agricultural activities, no easy answers. Contextual factors include:
  - Changing patterns of consumer demand
The action-dialogue process itself

- Observations: action-dialogue is absolutely essential – bringing together a range of practitioners, and practitioners together with government and researchers, is very educational, also inspiring
- Observation: not an easy process, there’s a tendency to argue in an ‘us versus them’ mode although there is much diversity of views within each group; is this a productive tension that we live with? would more regular contact be better, or result in too little productive tension?
- Question: are we looking for consensus? To clarify the issues? For the ‘best ideas to win out’?
- Concerns: government tends to not show up; how will this dialogue change anything – i.e. whose action, and when and where?

A diagram prepared by Diane Pieters that brings together many elements of the discussion was presented during this session. An important aspect of the process outlined in the diagram is to let communities understand that there is no unlimited funding coming from government. Communities should rather be told what the available funds are for them, and asked to decide how to use that funding in line with government frameworks and community-defined priorities. The community should be the central decision maker throughout the process.
Francois Lategan: A point that has been missing in this whole discussion is that agriculture takes place in context, and we haven’t dealt with that context sufficiently – the whole system of grants etc. – we don’t know how that system influences the attractiveness, relevance or even prominence of agricultural practice as a system. We haven’t asked that question yet.

Louise de Klerk: From a practitioner’s point of view, I have benefitted from the cross-pollination, from being challenged from a research point of view; and listening to government’s problems was valuable. We don’t necessarily have a right answer to the questions raised here but we should keep talking about them. And as practitioners we welcome any research that can highlight the weaknesses and strengths of what we are doing.

Tommy Mohajane: The private sector was not invited to participate in this action-dialogue, yet they are a very important part of what is happening out there. Government and practitioners cannot deal with these problems alone. Unions operating within a particular sector should also be invited. Let us invite other players into the dialogue so that at the end of the day there are no missing pieces of the jigsaw puzzle.

Francis Wilson: Generally the unions and business are involved in the Carnegie3 process; bringing them into a particular workshop does depend on who is available and what they have to contribute to that workshop’s focus.

Michael Aliber: When we speak of the private sector, who do we mean – do we mean agribusiness? Do we mean large-scale and also small-scale commercial farmers? We should not refer only to agribusiness and large-scale commercial enterprises when we think of the private sector – we need to start including small-scale farmers in our understanding of the term ‘commercial’.

Ben Cousins: I would like to adjust my typology, and to propose that each person here should work on their own typology for your own context, since these things are context-specific. But if you do develop a typology, don’t make it arbitrary. In too many of the typologies emerging out of government the criteria are not clear – they are simply using labels. It needs to be made clear on what basis you are distinguishing between types of producers – be rigorous about it. The real point of a typology is not the product, it’s the process of distinguishing differences between elements of your target population.

Wim van Averbeke: At the start of the development of this action-dialogue the NDP was central to the preparations; it seems to have disappeared in the course of the event. The NDP has two important elements for us: the first is the development of some new group of market-oriented
smallholders that the NDP calls ‘winners’, who become engaged in commodity production. The second is the revitalisation of the rural areas – essentially this means the former homelands – and one of the tasks ahead is to start working with those ideas, to see how one can develop a vision and put in place some of the strategies that allow that vision to be pursued. At this stage what we have seen are some elements of strategies but not yet what such a strategy would look like.

FW: In Ben’s typology we haven’t made an explicit distinction between full-time farmers and farmers for whom agriculture is just part of their income. This needs more thought.

Rauri Alcock: The state takes taxpayers’ money to “uplift the peasants” – this is an old-fashioned way of talking about it, but if you think about the question in this way then it isn’t about commercialisation, it’s about a way of supplementing people’s incomes through agriculture. That may be a simpler way to go; whether they are ‘winners’ or ‘weaners’ from the state system isn’t really the point. We don’t need to sit here and struggle to solve the problems of the new tenderpreneurs.

WvA: I don’t agree – the 300 000 ‘winners’ is a new class of farmers that is to be established, is to be created on land that is either going to be expropriated or made available through some form of transformation. They don’t exist yet – this is part of the new job creation strategy. They are not there now.

Brigid Letty: That’s the confusion with the typology – are we concerned about where we’re trying to get to or where the people are now?

WvA: Imagine a river valley, where you replace the white cotton farmers with new black farmers – where are these farmers coming from? Are they farm workers? Are they youngsters coming from somewhere else? We need to create the strategies and opportunities for this to happen. That’s the way I understand what the NDP document is about.

FW: That debate is at the heart of what we are talking about. We must realise that we have an enormous amount of thinking to do on both those statements.

MA: We must also note that we didn’t say much in the discussion about the land reform context versus the former homelands context.

“. . . are we concerned about where we’re trying to get to or where the people are now?”
Ten points on water and climate change to consider when thinking about farming

Jessica Wilson
Environmental Monitoring Group

1. South Africa is a water stressed country

We don’t get a lot of rain (on average 450 mm per year, which is just over half the global average); and a low percentage of rain ends up in rivers. Our rivers are small, unevenly distributed and often perennial. With approximately 1 000 m³ per person per year, the UN classifies South Africa as water stressed.

2. Climate change is happening and will affect water availability, predictability and quality

The earth has already heated up by almost 1°C and it could be as much as 4–6°C hotter by the end of this century. This heating will play havoc with the earth’s climate. Rainfall patterns will shift – seasons, intensity of rainfall, etc. – soil moisture will decrease, dams will store less due to water loss through evaporation, and evapotranspiration will increase. Water quality will also be affected. Past records of rainfall and climate will not be reliable.

3. Fresh (surface) water allocation is at its limit

Most of South Africa’s fresh water has been allocated. This creates a lot of pressure within and between sectors to get an increased share of this scarce resource. Agriculture currently uses 62%. The fastest-growing sector is urban demand – to meet people’s domestic needs for water and sanitation. The NDP aims to increase the area of land under irrigation by 50%. This is supported by the National Water Resources Strategy (June 2013), which recognises that water is a limiting factor for growth in agriculture, but says this irrigation water need will be met through “water use efficiency and selected new developments”. There is no evidence or plan to show where this water will come from.

4. Augmenting fresh water supplies has problems

New supply-side schemes have problems. With groundwater, there is still a lot of discussion on how much is actually available and how much can be extracted sustainably. It is also unevenly distributed. Desalination sounds like a good idea, but it is expensive and energy-
intensive. Aside from the problem that Eskom is already struggling to keep the lights on, South Africa’s energy is generated by burning coal, and this contributes to climate change; so using large quantities of energy to produce fresh water is not really viable.

5. **Shift from supply- to demand-side management, including the use of pricing**

Because of supply-side constraints and the recognition that resources are finite, there has been a growing shift across the world to manage the use of natural resources by managing demand. For example, pricing is used to reduce how much is used. Water has traditionally been very cheap, if not free. This is unlikely to remain the case and there is growing pressure to reflect the full cost of water in its price. This could include a scarcity value.

6. ‘**Use it or lose it**’ says the Draft National Water Policy Review

The principle is that if a farmer has a water allocation that she is not using, it is returned to the central pool for redistribution by national government. There has been extremely limited water reallocation from, for example, commercial white farmers, and this is an attempt to redress this. There are worries though, that this water will not go back to – for example – food growing, but instead be allocated to black-owned mining companies. (The Review also puts forward a principle that ownership by race should be the primary means by which water allocation decisions are made.)

7. **Environmental imperative to change all forms of production, including agriculture**

Many ecosystems are at their breaking point in terms of being able to process waste and withstand levels of abstraction. It is necessary for all human activities to become more in-tune with the ecological parameters of the planet. For farming, this means, amongst other things, taking greater care to ensure that rivers are not polluted by pesticide and fertiliser run-off; that lands are not eroded; that water use is efficient; and that contributions to climate change are minimised.

8. **Consumer demand for low water and carbon footprints in food**

Consumers worried about the state of the planet are demanding more information about how their food is produced and looking for promises that the content of ‘virtual water’ and carbon footprints is low. (This is unlikely to be a formal international trade barrier in the near future, but consumer demand could start shaping production methods.)
9. **The water-energy-food nexus**

There is growing recognition that solving problems in the water, energy and food sectors cannot be done independently, but requires a holistic approach. Putting more land under irrigation might solve food security problems, but could exacerbate water scarcity; likewise addressing water scarcity through desalination makes the energy and climate crisis worse.

10. **The rights of nature**

This is a paradigm shift out of human-centred thinking that has dominated Western (and other) cultures for centuries. Instead of seeing man having dominion over nature, it recognises that human beings are part of nature and that human health and well-being are intrinsically connected to the health and well-being of other species and ecosystems. Rivers, therefore, have a right to exist in and of themselves, and any decisions that might affect them should also be looked at from the point of view of the river and all the life that it supports. This view of our place in the natural world is starting to inform policy, and has been recognised in law in Bolivia and New Zealand.

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**POST-PRESENTATION DISCUSSION**

*Diane Pieters:* It would be a real win for the country if part of government’s philosophy was climate-smart agriculture, if that could be the starting point for everything they do in regard to rolling out programmes. This is a central issue.

*Ben Cousins:* If the NDP is wrong, and there aren’t 500 000 extra hectares of irrigation, what does this mean for its whole strategy? Wim’s findings, confirmed by mine, are that smallholder-irrigated agriculture is very labour-intensive, and if done efficiently using appropriate methods can be very job-creating – my estimate is four jobs per hectare, though at not very high incomes per farmer. Maybe the more successful farmers earn about R40 000 per year. But if that’s not possible, what are the implications? One implication, I think, is that you have to compare these smallholder-irrigated schemes with maize schemes using centre-pivots – how many people do those schemes employ? Not nearly as many. We’re back to the question of land reform – if land is going to be transferred, we also need to think about transferring water. And with what kinds of irrigation system? These are big policy issues that no government policy is addressing – the NDP is very vague about these fundamental questions. We need to move from this small-scale agriculture focus to a focus on land reform and smallholder agriculture, to try and address these questions.

“Rivers . . . have a right to exist in and of themselves, and any decisions that might affect them should also be looked at from the point of view of the river and all the life that it supports.”
Francois Lategan: There’s an issue being addressed here for the first time: the internationalisation of water rights. South Africa is not in isolation with regard to its water consumption and resources. We are part of international water systems – our water comes from Lesotho, international rivers make up part of our irrigation schemes, and I don’t see anywhere that our agricultural development programmes, the NDP or any strategies take into consideration the major conflicts that we are creating, if what the presentation highlights is correct. There will be other countries claiming that they have a similar right to the water we are using, and consumption becomes a problem – this will then nullify any efforts we make in terms of building irrigation schemes or other agriculture-based job-creation schemes. Do we need to make people aware that this is where things are going?

Tozamile Lukhalo: I have a question for the academics. Speaking on behalf of extension officers, I feel that they should be more climate-smart in their agricultural work. Is there any module in their training that talks to climate-smart agriculture?

Tommy Mohajane: Is there any strategy to harvest inland water? And considering the amount of water that flows into the sea, is there a strategy to capture any of this?

Jessica Wilson: A lot of work is being done on rainwater harvesting and capture before it gets to the rivers. On the whole not a lot of our water flows into the sea. And there is a requirement for what is called the ecological reserve – to leave enough water in the rivers for them to function as rivers; that is not being established in many of the rivers, and it’s not being met even where it has been established. From an ecological perspective the water flowing into the sea is not being wasted. But there is potential to harvest rainwater during the heavy rainfall periods in some regions, and as far as I know there is not a national strategy around this. The government hands out rainwater tanks but not in an integrated way. There is also consideration being given to recharging ground water.

Andrew Kerr: Should we be worrying about acid rain?

JW: The whole issue of water quality is a big worry. It’s not only a question of availability of water.

Francis Wilson: There are two really important points to take away from this discussion: first, climate-smart agriculture, and the need for a training module for extension officers on this issue; and second, the silence over how one is going to create 500 000 new irrigated hectares for farming.

“We’re back to the question of land reform – if land is going to be transferred, we also need to think about transferring water.”
SMALLHOLDER AGRICULTURE STATISTICS

Itani Magwaba
Statistics South Africa

For the past 4–5 years we have been trying to come up with a strategy on agricultural statistics. We have been struggling to get consensus, but that doesn’t mean that nothing is being done to improve the quantity and quality of the data. I will focus here on smallholder agriculture.

Current status of agricultural statistics

- Smallholder and subsistence agriculture remain on the sidelines as far as statistics are concerned.
- The data quality (depth and breadth) has gaps.
- There are limited skills to handle agriculture statistics in the three spheres of government.
- There is a lack of consensus on standardised definitions for farmer typologies – smallholder, subsistence, small-scale, commercial, etc. There are some definitions that DAFF has been working on in terms of what the farmer’s market is, the size of the herd etc.; but it is also the case that every department comes up with its own definitions, in terms of whatever the policy is that the government wants to implement.
- There is a poorly organised national agricultural statistical system. For us to improve the data it would be important to have a census or survey on agriculture.

The document <Current data collection activities.doc> gives an idea of collection activities being undertaken by government.16 Some of the statistics are collected by Stats SA and some by DAFF. At Stats SA we have been conducting an annual survey of agriculture since 2008. This survey covers mostly financial expenditure: income, expenditure, budgets, balance sheets, capital expenditure etc. Since 2002 we have also conducted a census of commercial agriculture, at the request of and fully funded by DAFF. In 2007 we conducted another census, funded 50–50 by Stats SA and DAFF. In 2012 – as those familiar with the trend will know – there was no census, because DAFF said they were no longer interested in commercial agriculture. Instead they wanted information on smallholder and subsistence farming. We tried to get the funding from Treasury or another source, but weren’t

16 This document is available from StatsSA on request.

“There is a poorly organised national agricultural statistical system. For us to improve the data it would be important to have a census or survey on agriculture.”
“...we don’t know the total size of agricultural land, and we don’t know much about the number of subsistence or smallholder farmers.”

successful, so there was no census. So there’s a break in the trend.

In the 2011 Population Census four questions were included about agricultural activity at household level. DAFF also conducts some surveys on crop production; they also get information from the commodity associations such as Grain SA and from individual farmers, and they use this information for the Crop Estimates Committee. I don’t know how good their coverage and their samples are, in terms of representation. Then there are other surveys conducted by the Department of Water Affairs relating to water quality, use and so on – to what extent we are not sure. Then, the Department of Rural Development collects data about land sales, transfers and so on.

Identification of data gaps

In 2009 an exercise was done to try and identify the data gaps. The criteria used to identify the gaps were:

- importance of a data item as planning tool, e.g. major land user, income generated, number of farmers engaged etc;
- importance of a variable in meeting government’s ten priority areas data needs; and
- importance of a data category in meeting data requirements for the Millennium Development Goals.

Certain data gaps were identified at that time. For example, we don’t know the total size of agricultural land, and we don’t know much about the number of subsistence or smallholder farmers. There has been a proposal that we should do a survey or a census covering those questions every ten years. With regard to land reform, there is presently no data available on what has been transferred and how much land this amounts to.

The way forward

We have come up with a draft strategy, working to some extent with DAFF, in which we say that we need to develop a National Agricultural Statistics Subsystem (NASS). This would be a subsystem of a National Statistics System which we are in the process of planning. There has been a version of NASS in place for many years, but it has lacked momentum. Now, with a new Minister in place, there could be renewed momentum to get such a system working.

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17 A Stats SA PowerPoint presentation summarising Census 2011 data on household agriculture is available via the Carnegie3 website: www.carnegie3.org.za
The objective of NASS should be to deliver comprehensive data to address gaps in terms of: quality, quantity and necessary skills. Thus, it will consists of the following:

1. A proactive National Agricultural Statistical Coordination Committee (NASCC).
2. Frames development and maintenance.
3. Defining roles of various stakeholders.
4. An integrated data collection programme (surveys and especially admin sources).

In this presentation I will focus on items 2 and 4 in this list.

Frames development and maintenance
The following are either current or possible registers to be developed:

- Stats SA’s Business Register
  - This is the register we used to use to conduct all our economic surveys; it is based on the SARS register, and this poses certain challenges – the main one being classification, since SARS is concerned with maximising revenue, not classifying enterprises.

- Population census-based frame
  - This is a household-based frame, derived from the 2011 Population Census.
  - The frame is a combination of both taxpaying and non-taxpaying agricultural households in the country. Thus there will be an overlap between the Business Register and this frame, since most farmers will be covered as both an enterprise and a household. The challenge is how to combine the two.

- Land reform register
  - The DRDLR will develop and maintain a frame of land reform beneficiaries.

- Departments and institutions such as the DWEA and ESKOM also possess frames.

- Agriculture departments’ register

The following are current and proposed registers within government at national, provincial and local levels:

- DAFF’s marine fisheries register
  - This is a relatively comprehensive register which can be useful as a frame in the collection of fisheries statistics.

- DAFF’s forestry register
  - In most part, this frame is in the possession of a private entity.
  - It is highly advisable that DAFF should oversee the development and maintenance of this frame.

- Development of an integrated smallholder and subsistence agriculture database.
  - Provincial Departments of Agriculture, through their extension services, do have

“We are able to get data for numbers of smallholder/ small-scale farmers, but the biggest gap that we have is in the scale of production . . .”
some information on beneficiaries they serve, although there is concern in some quarters about whether the country has enough extension officers.

- Some municipalities also collect information on beneficiaries they serve.
- There is a need to develop an integrated database, co-ordinated by DAFF, of all information collected through extension and other services (e.g. funding).

**Adopting an Integrated Survey Programme going forward**

An Integrated Survey Programme would cover the following household food security and environmental statistics, to be collected by Stats SA or by the relevant government departments:

- **Environmental statistics** such as water use, quality and quantity and land under forest cover, to mention but a few, should remain the competency of DAFF and DWEA.
- **Household food security** data should be generated as a separate stream from ordinary agricultural statistics. Stats SA should be responsible for the collection of these statistics, possibly through the existing household survey programme.
- **Supply-side food security** will be covered in the proposed integrated survey programme. In this regard it is necessary to go to farmers more than once a year, because of the seasonal planting of crops or variations in herd size over the course of each year. Either Stats SA or DAFF could do these surveys. We are able to get data for numbers of smallholder/small-scale farmers, but the biggest gap that we have is in the scale of production, especially of certain crops. (Some farmers also under-report, for tax purposes.)

We also plan to conduct a 5-yearly census of commercial agriculture, and a 10-yearly census of all agriculture – commercial, smallholder, subsistence etc. This is not available now – and another way of saying ‘not available’ is ‘not funded’.

**Critical success factors**

The biggest problem we have, not only in government but in other big institutions such as mining, is that people begin to operate in their own silos, and constantly refer you to other individuals or departments for aspects of the work you are trying to do. This is true especially once a department has its own funding – it tends to operate in a silo, without seeking links with other departments. In a situation like this it is very difficult for us to move forward with cross-departmental data collection.

In this context, these are some of the critical success factors we need to work to achieve:

- Buy-in by accounting officers, executing authorities and National Treasury.
- Developing an integrated capacity building programme, like the CRUISE programme at Stellenbosch University. We are also starting discussions with one of the local universities to develop a curriculum on agricultural statistics. At present there is no university in the country that includes agriculture in its statistics courses.
- All spheres of government, that is, national, provincial and municipal administration, should be encouraged to establish dedicated statistical units.
- We need to empower provincial and municipal administration to collect administrative data variables, such as livestock types and numbers.
- We need to see whether it is possible to increase the number of agricultural extension officers in provinces.

**THE DATA CHALLENGE**

*Andrew Kerr*

DataFirst, SALDRU, University of Cape Town

To answer some questions that are of interest to this group one really needs either surveys or a census. Much of this data could come from Stats SA. But the priorities of Stats SA are not necessarily those of agriculture researchers and practitioners. For example Stats SA takes seriously its commitments to the UN and IMF on measuring employment and GDP. It is not simply into doing “statistics for policy”.

Agricultural employment has been measured quite poorly in the October Household Surveys and Labour Force Surveys which ran between 1994 and 2007. Employment was highly variable. Since 2008 with the introduction of the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) subsistence agriculture has no longer been included in the definition of employment.

To run a reliable survey you need to be able to draw a representative sample, for which you need a sample frame. For looking at households this could be the census; for looking at formal farms this could be the VAT register.

My suggestion is that if the group wants to run a survey to get at agriculture issues within households, this could best be done using the model that Stats SA uses to survey informal firms in its Survey of Employers and Self-Employed. The household survey is used, and anyone running an informal (non-VAT registered) firm is targeted for a follow-up survey. In
“... [running] a survey to get at agriculture issues within households ... could best be done using the model that Stats SA uses to survey informal firms in its Survey of Employers and Self-Employed.”

The 2011 census data released by Stats SA includes very low-level data on small areas, along with shape files that allow you to see where this area is on a map. Anyone doing anthropological fieldwork in a particular area could potentially use this data to see what the census says about the area they are investigating. DataFirst is undertaking a project to make this data more easily accessible.

**Post-presentation discussion**

*Itani Magwaba:* One problem we face is that we are not getting enough co-operation from the farmers. They will send us to their accountants for financial information; but the accountants do not know about how many people are being employed, what the production details are, etc.

*Ben Cousins:* Across Africa agricultural statistics are known to be completely unreliable. The FAO collects statistics from national governments and puts them in international reports, but it’s very difficult for national governments to go out and collect information from millions of smallholders. We’re in a similar situation here.

*Rauri Alcock:* As soon as there’s a reason to lie, people will lie. With livestock numbers, for example, you have to pay a dipping fee for each animal; people who can afford to pay the fee will provide reasonably accurate numbers, but those who can’t afford to pay will take their animals to the tanks without recording that they are doing so. We have found that for the whole of KwaZulu-Natal, the dipping statistics are out by a factor of 4 to 6.

*Wim van Averbeke:* It may be true that numbers have been recorded inaccurately, also in the past; but you can make calculations about how many cattle would be sustainable on a certain area of land, and use that as a guide to what the real numbers are. In earlier periods statistics were compiled on the basis of data collected regularly by extension officers.

*Hendrik Smith:* We would love to get statistics on climate-smart agriculture, for example conservation agriculture – is it possible to include questions about these practices in the questionnaires from Stats SA and other sources? For example where there is now a question on production, also ask about how the crop is produced – using conventional or sustainable methods? It has become very important to get data on trends and adoption figures.
Francois Lategan: From the little bit of work that I’ve done on the performance of agriculture I’ve learned that if you ask three people a question you get five different answers. Reliability is always an issue in how people answer question, even if they are the right people to ask. Is there a way to use different parameters to try and answer the same questions, rather than looking for detailed numbers as we do now? For example, get external experts to do crop estimates to a reasonable degree of accuracy, to dilute the irrationality of the answers we get by going directly to farmers.

Francis Wilson: We need to take one step back and ask what is the information we really need about agriculture, instead of just collecting statistics because someone has asked for them. Coming back to the question of how many unoccupied farms we have, we need to find out how many such farms they are, and whether they change the way we talk about the “land question”. Another issue is to clarify what we mean by “subsistence farmers”. These are people who have been kept on the land for a hundred years because of an anti-urbanisation policy; they have no land beyond a little garden. Almost none of their income is derived from agriculture but they are still somehow part of the agriculture statistics.

BC: But this is a normative view of agriculture. They are in fact involved in food production; and they are included in the survey of 2.9 million households doing subsistence farming.

WvA: Going beyond statistics, it would also be good to do case studies to elaborate on relationships between land and livelihoods that can illustrate the statistics. Another question we need to look at is to what extent we have a picture of “white” farming in South Africa in terms of use of farmland. Irrigation of land can be opportunistic, happening once a year; or it can be full irrigation that applies water when it is needed. These are all important planning inputs if you want to settle farmers on smaller pieces of land. We need to know where the irrigated farmland is, how much of it is used, and so on. There are many farm that are more like “nature reserves” with wild vegetation, not crops.

FW: What we’re saying is that land use mapping is really important.

BC: This comes back to the question of the census. Statistics are race-blind, but we need to break them down by race. We have no statistics on the number of black commercial farmers, but the census could provide these. Stats SA is not asking the research community for help in designing questionnaires. My appeal to Itani is for Stats SA to bring the different stakeholders together – researchers, academics, others – to inform the design of the data collection instruments as well as the analysis of the data.

FL: Government is currently the most important landowner in the country, with the most land. If
We follow the route being discussed here, we also need to look at what is happening on government land. We need a land use census of the whole country. Then we can look at efficiency of all land use – is this the platform to ask for it?

**FW:** What is emerging is that proper data on agriculture in terms of both land use and typology are very important issues.

**Andrew Kerr:** Labour economists don’t think that Stats SA’s job is to tell them what is going on in the data. We think they should be making the data available to us – which they’ve done, in the form of the Census 10% sample, confidentialised – and we economists have tools to analyse the data. My suggestion is that people who have questions of the kinds being raised here should make contact with labour economists to help them find answers using the Stats SA data, rather than asking Stats SA to do this.

**IM:** That is correct. If you want to use the data to talk about policy implications you are getting involved in politics, and that affects the independence of an organisation like Stats SA. Our job is to produce data which are informed by the needs of the users; if we have not done enough consultation in the past we need to do more of this going forward.

**HS:** There is land use data available in the form of the National Land Cover Map, which is compiled through a collaboration between the ARC and the CSIR. It’s fairly regularly updated, and it has about 20 different classes of land use, including commercial irrigated, subsistence irrigated etc. The data sources include satellite imagery.

**Brigid Letty:** The issue with a map like that is that it’s not going to show you abandonment. For example it won’t show you whether an area under natural vegetation is a game farm or an abandoned piece of land.

**FW:** It’s clear that one of the important gaps that needs to be filled is the amount of interaction between Stats SA and other stakeholders such as researchers.

**BC:** It is possible for Carnegie3 to organise a workshop on data systems, in which we could bring together researchers who use a range of different data systems, including Stats SA. Perhaps this could be a contribution towards developing the National Agricultural Statistics Subsystem. For example, there are real difficulties relating to data on communal land; people living on this land are answering that they ‘own’ the land because they feel a strong sense of ownership, but in legal terms this is inaccurate.

**IM:** In the census there are questions on whether activities like farming are ‘household-operated’ that were very badly completed.
RA: Part of the problem with survey questions is that the language of the question itself is a problem. You need to get people who understand language issues to pose the questions, using terms that actually mean what the question wants to ask in the particular language. For example, I’ve found the term “farmer of livestock” missing in the Zulu language. Or a word used for “farming” can actually mean “ownership”. The language of the census document doesn’t allow for the complex ways in which people interpret a question like “is this your home?”

FW: There is also the whole contested issue of women’s right to land. It’s another one of the very complex issues that we have to start looking at. Perhaps we need a workshop on this issue.

Plenary Discussion Day 3: Key Challenges Identified

In the final session of the action-dialogue participants were asked to address the question “what do you recommend going forward to support small-scale agriculture?” by identifying:
- three priorities for government
- three priorities for practitioners
- three priorities for researchers.

Responses offered by all participants were compiled into the lists of recommendations below.

Recommendations for government

Government should:

1. Create clear directed policies for different groups of farmers.
2. Provide support services – financial support structured in such a way that it does not create dependencies, does not leave farmers perpetually in the state of being ‘emerging farmers’.
3. Scale up projects that work from the project sector
4. Collect and provide information via the extension officers – e.g. in earlier times there was a stock book with information about sale of stock, dipping, herd and crop size etc. This would be a way to get reliable statistics.
5. Clarify and improve land tenure and water rights, which are very important – smaller farmers can’t become bigger because they don’t have clear strong rights to land and water. It was a big mistake to separate land reform and agriculture into two ministries. There should have been one department.
6. Have differentiated policies that are flexible – suitable for different groups of farmer, and allowing farmers to move between groups in terms of crop type and size, scale of operation etc.
7. Make integrated multi-departmental support available – technical, financial, networking...
with relevant departments for assistance.

8. Strengthen the extension systems informally; the extension officers are not enough on the ground, you also need local people (such as the ‘village link people’) to connect the farmers and provide localised training for farmers.

9. Upgrade existing irrigation schemes before looking at relocating or transforming other schemes. Government should also avoid giving tenders to favoured individuals whose only interest is in making a profit, and rather give infrastructure directly to the people who will install and use it – tenderpreneurs will choose cheaper materials etc.

10. Do more of the work itself instead of outsourcing it via tenders.

11. Work in a more focused way, with a programme-based approach – they need to agree on what to do and stick to it.

12. Following from this, improve levels of discipline in the cadres tasked with implementing programmes and policies, to align with the task at hand.

13. Make sure that there is alignment of financial and human resources to these programmes – i.e. put things in place to implement the agreed programmes (e.g. don’t use tractors just because they were donated to the government, if they aren’t part of the agreed government programme).

14. Develop policies that are based on a commitment to climate-smart agriculture.

15. Implement and improve capacity building in servicing agriculture, with regard to training, functional competency and accountability structures.

16. Look at the potential of incentive schemes as mechanisms for implementing and supporting small-scale agriculture.

17. When implementing extension services, recognise that the key element of these services is building on the assets that are there – extension officers must receive better training, based on experience and deep knowledge of what farmers already do and what they need.

18. Start by accepting that it isn’t government’s role to solve every problem, but rather to build on assets that are already there – and introduce relevant new assets when these are needed. These assets can sometimes best be delivered by means of subsidies for improving existing infrastructure, such as fencing.

**Recommendations for practitioners**

Practitioners should:

1. Play a complementary role with government such that they identify weaknesses or gaps within government and try to fill those gaps.

2. Aim to complement one another – e.g. one practitioner having a production project,
another having a marketing project.

3. Introduce innovative ideas – e.g. with regard to the point made in several presentations about co-ops failing in the past, we have acknowledged that they also have a valuable role to play, so must come up with innovative ideas about how best to use them.

4. Try to foster relationships between farmers and other stakeholders – for farmers to benefit they need these external stakeholders (private sector or government). Create collaborative networks and effective partnerships for sustainable interventions, innovations and communication.

5. Have an in-depth understanding of who farmers are, what they do, their context – a focus on listening to them.

6. Facilitate network development, connecting farmers to services that are available.

7. Focus on viable and sustainable development, looking at the longevity of interventions beyond their funding period.

8. Pilot projects to allow government to learn – the politics of situations can drive away the focus of the good people who want to learn from government initiatives such as pilots, and sometimes practitioners are better placed to do the piloting work.

9. Encourage government to change through prodding them – for example enforcing small initiatives that government doesn’t think can work, such as vaccinating chickens; this also includes advocacy work.

10. Develop implementation protocols with government so that they are aware of what’s going on, when they visit an area they can learn from what local practitioners are doing.

11. Make transition and upscaling part of practitioners’ development plans for projects.

12. Establish strong monitoring and evaluation systems and data collection processes. Link up with researchers to obtain scientific evidence of the impact of projects – practitioners can’t always do this effectively themselves.

13. There needs to be some sort of profiling among practitioners – ‘we are a consultancy, a for-profit organisation, a non-profit NGO etc.’ to make the work they more transparent.

14. Focus on existing local institutions as platforms for implementation.

15. Create or encouraging an environment of learning.

16. Raise funds to work on best practice.

**Recommendations for researchers**

Researchers should:

1. Publish the information they collect, and in accessible forms.

2. Come up with sustainable development models – and investigate these in context (since what happens in one part of the country may not work elsewhere in the country).
3. Interrogate existing initiatives and improve concepts
4. Provoke practitioners and government with debate, otherwise we won’t move forward; create productive tension between government and practitioners.
5. Use more appropriate research tools to allow for collection of more realistic data, and produce a more rigorous analysis.
6. Select respondents to questionnaires carefully, and use consultative methods as far as possible in the process of working with respondents – researchers sometimes have a tendency to just grab what we can and tweak the data, when the basis of the information is not very credible.
7. Be more realistic with research outputs – the aim should be that whatever is published is directed towards solving the problems they intend to solve – i.e. recommendations to policy makers should be usable.
8. Work towards upgrading and revising the curriculum at universities and other higher education institutions to reflect new technology and approaches to farming – e.g. climate-smart agriculture – and to improve capacity of extension officers.
9. Provide evidence to influence government policies – e.g. with regard to land distribution, it’s important to provide government with evidence that there is land which people are not using, and draw out the implications of this for policy.
10. Do more relevant research suited to different farmer categories – there still seems to be a focus on looking at commercial farming and scaling it down, rather than investigating alternatives.
11. Align research as a whole better to a national agenda to increase its relevance.
12. Undertake a serious investigation into the structure of South African agriculture as a whole, with due recognition of spatial diversity across the whole country – i.e. research needs to be done that covers the whole country rather than just zooming in on specific areas and initiatives.
14. Apply innovation-oriented and integrated systems research approaches.
15. Do research into what works and why – try to move beyond the charismatic leader to understand the system that makes something work.
16. Do research into why things don’t work – for example they may fail just because there wasn’t funding in one year. Factors that lead to failure need to be identified.
17. Keep asking the question and working to extract answers from practitioners about how to scale up; that may mean asking how a project can multiply itself, go viral, or it may mean asking how to make it much bigger than it is – this is the question of how to use what we know to bring about systemic change.
Commenting on the recommendations offered in this session, Ben Cousins made the point that there are many which focus on relationships between government and practitioners, where they link up with each other very clearly – this is the result of addressing these issues from the perspective of an action-dialogue, where people talk about what they should be doing.

In the closing plenary discussion, a further list of recommendations emerged to add to those above, most of which called for or implied the strengthening of relationships between the government, practitioners, researchers and farmers.

**Further recommendations and questions arising from the discussion**

*On coming out of our silos to work together:*
- Our ways of working should be farmer-centric.
- To escape from our silos, we should create a national platform for action-dialogue where researchers, practitioners and government interact – a bigger and perhaps different way of doing what we did here.
- Government could fund one day a year when all practitioners come together for a day, put up their stalls, researchers have their papers available, and government comes to listen, to explore what’s on offer.
- There is enormous value in the periodic physical coming together of people from different interest groups – the energy of cross-pollination is created at such events.
- The private sector is not represented at this action-dialogue, but they are practitioners of a kind. Kenneth Carden’s description of Spar working with local smallholders is an example of that. They are part of the picture. We are not limiting our concept of practitioner to NGOs – includes the private sector

*On government’s relationship to pilot projects:*
- We focus on the idea of pilots being conducted by practitioners but it should also be a government responsibility – government should fund and learn from pilots.
- Are we concluding that government can’t pilot projects, and should support others to do this? In the past government has tended to turn pilot projects into policy before any real piloting had taken place.
- And yet there is a lot of scope for doing them in partnership with government – government needs to be there to build the networks that can take a pilot further.
- All the NGO practitioners who are here are piloting things for government. They may be operating in terms of consultancy models but actually what they are doing is piloting. But because it isn’t called a pilot, government just keeps calling in its own consultants.
- The NDP talks about a public-private partnership – we’re not addressing that here. What
about structures where government does the pilots and private enterprise can provide funding?

- Where we have piloted things for the government without government funding they just ignore us; it’s only when they have money involved that they take notice. But there are cases, like the Fort Hare Dairy project, where government put in much less money than the private sector but is very interested in what’s happening there, because there are political reasons for them to take an interest in that location. In other words, the levels of interest shown by government can vary according to circumstance, and the dynamics involved.

**On farming and the youth:**

- There are international research projects on youth and agriculture – we could mobilise that research here.
- We seem to be agreeing that it’s an underlying or cross-cutting concern for government, practitioners and researchers.

**On urban and rural concerns:**

- We all understand that poverty is in both rural and urban areas – how far have we gone towards looking at urban poverty? If we have vibrant rural economies, that can translate into lessening the poverty we have in the urban areas and stopping people migrating to urban areas.
- But at the same time in the rural areas we have the problem of people building houses on agricultural land. This is an issue that needs to be addressed.

**Concluding Remarks**

*Francis Wilson*

There has been a sea change in how we think and talk about agriculture. There was a long period of time when government didn’t want to know what practitioners were busy with, or listen to academics, but now there is a realisation that we need each other. We know that we must bring in business, unions and other partners for events like these, but this is a good beginning. This is a 4-year process. We now need to plan a 1–2 day national workshop funded by government, since we have a critical mass of people who know each other, and are concerned about these issues based on their different contexts and experiences around the country.
LAST WORDS FROM THE ACTION-DIALOGUE PARTICIPANTS

Before leaving, all participants present on the last day of the action-dialogue were asked to provide an answer to the question: What was the most important benefit you derived from this action-dialogue? These were their responses:

- As government we need to consult more with a range of stakeholders.  
  *Itani Magwaba*

- The big shift taking place is that practitioners, researchers and government are talking to each other in new spirit compared with even five years ago.  
  *Francis Wilson*

- Identification and acknowledgement of the silo effect is really important.  
  *Lyle Kew*

- Increasing recognition of the continuum effect in agriculture, and the implications this has for the national extension training programme.  
  *Francois Lategan*

- The importance of dialogue, communication, and the hope of action.  
  *Hendrik Smith*

- Learning what practitioners are doing, and the impact of that work.  
  *Wim van Averbeke*

- When you sit in your own silo worrying about these issues, it is good to understand at a higher level, i.e. at government and academic level, what other people are doing and worrying about.  
  *Rauri Alcock*

- There are existing gaps and knowledge, for example on land utilisation in the large-scale commercial sector, that I didn’t realise existed.  
  *Brigid Letty*

- I found it interesting that we tried to bridge the gap between smallholders and commercial farmers in this workshop. Normally smallholders are sidelined in any discussions or workshops on farming.  
  *Gugu Mbatha*
− I was fascinated by the realisation that we don’t have to be blinkered in our approach, we can have a holistic approach to solving our problems.  
*Arnold Derembwe*

− It was an eye-opening experience, recognising the diversity and complexity of the challenge, also the variety of people working on the problems.  
*Mikal Lambert*

− I’m curious about the consensus coming through the discussion that producer co-ops don’t work, and wonder why people think this.  
*Jessica Wilson*

− I’ve been impressed by the methods and approach adopted by NGOs like Siyavuna and Timbali, which seem to be working properly.  
*Mbongeni Maziya*

− I realised that development is not a temporary project – as practitioners and NGOs we also create gaps that can be complemented by one another. The complementary effect among all the actors addressing issues of poverty is very necessary.  
*Vuyani Somyo*

− Not a single government official who was here throughout the action-dialogue; they are never able to properly involve themselves in these kinds of dialogue, since they are sent on elsewhere halfway through – that’s the way government works. And yet so much depends on them. The way that government works is perhaps the biggest problem of all.  
*Ben Cousins*
Appendix 1: Questionnaire for Practitioners

Prior to the action-dialogue the following questionnaire was circulated to all practitioners who had accepted the invitation to participate.

Workshop: Opportunities, constraints and innovative approaches in small-scale agriculture in South Africa

Questions for practitioners

The objective of the workshop is to identify emerging opportunities for and key constraints on small-scale agriculture in South Africa, drawing on the experiences of practitioners located primarily in non-governmental organisations and the private sector, and to identify the main lessons for national and provincial policy-making on agriculture.

Please answer the following questions in your presentation:

1. Which social challenges and problems does your programme respond to, and how exactly does it respond to them?
2. Which government policies and programmes are most relevant to your own programme? Does your programme connect directly in any way to government programmes, and if so, how does this work?
3. What are the key emerging opportunities that your programme responds to, and how exactly does it respond to them?
4. Does your programme build on any existing positive realities and dynamics in the contexts in which you work, (e.g small farmer skills, or interest in producing a surplus for markets) and if so, can you describe how it does so?
5. How does your programme respond to the particular conditions, constraints and challenges that exist in the contexts in which you work?
6. How much external support does your programme provide to small-scale producers? Please describe the support in terms of:
   a. training
   b. funding per participant per year, in cash or in kind
   c. expertise (e.g. in advice and guidance)
   d. decision-making (e.g. in relation to marketing)
   e. other kinds of support
7. Which key decisions do small-scale farmers make themselves, and which are made on their behalf by the programme? Will this change in future?
8. Does the programme seek to support local institutional development, and if so, how?
9. Identify key differences amongst the small-scale farmers you work with, in relation to gender, age, education and wealth. How do these differences influence the work of the programme?
10. *How does learning take place* within your programme, by:
   a. programme staff
   b. small-scale farmers

11. Will the small-scale farmers you work with be able to *operate on their own* at some point, without the external support that you provide? If yes, what will be the key reasons for this?

12. Does your programme address the *larger structural constraints* facing small-scale farmers, in any way? Or, what have you learned about the nature of these structural constraints?

13. What are the *key policy lessons* you would like to offer to government, based on your practical experience?
APPENDIX 2: NOTES ON PARTICIPANTS

RAURI ALCOCK
Position: Director
Organisation: Mdukatshani Rural Development Project

MICHAEL ALIBER
Position: Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension
Organisation: University of Fort Hare

KENNETH CARDEN
Position: Programme Lead
Organisation: Southern Africa Food Lab

BEN COUSINS
Position: Professor and DST/NRF Chair in Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies.
Organisation: University of the Western Cape (UWC)

LOUISE DE KLERK
Position: Chief Executive Officer
Organisation: Timbali Technology Incubator

ANOLD DEREtimbwe
Position: Senior Business Advisor
Organisation: TechnoServe SouthAfrica

JEFF EVEN
Position: CEO Amadlelo Agri
Organisation: Amadlelo Agri (Pty) Ltd

ANDREW KERR
Position: Senior Research Officer
Organisation: DataFirst, UCT
ALFRED (LYLE) KEW  
Position: Managing Director of Mgcunube Development NPC and CEO of Keep the Dream CC  
Organisation: Mgcunube Development NPC and Keep the Dream CC

MIKAL LAMBERT  
Organisation: Goedgedacht Trust

FRANCOIS LATEGAN  
Position: Senior Lecturer, Agricultural Extension and Rural Development,  
Organisation: Cape Peninsula University of Technology

BRIGID LETTY  
Position: Principal Scientist  
Organisation: Institute of Natural Resources NPC

TOZAMILE LUKHALO  
Position: Director: National Extension Reform  
Organisation: Department of Agriculture Forestry & Fisheries (DAFF)

ITANI MAGWABA  
Position: Executive Manager  
Organisation: Statistics South Africa

LUNGISA MATSHIMANE  
Position: Centre Manager  
Organisation: Timbali Technology Incubator

MBONGENI MAZIYA  
Position: Marketing Researcher  
Organisation: Farmer Support Group

GUGU MBATHA  
Position: Project Manager  
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MASANA NDIKA-KANGA
Position: Senior Research Officer
Organisation: Carnegie3/Poverty & Inequality Initiative at the University of Cape Town

DIANE PIETERS
Position: Director
Organisation: Siyavuna

MASTOERA SADAN
Position: Programme Manager
Organisation: Programme to Support Pro-Poor Policy Development (PSPPD II)

HENDRIK SMITH
Position: Conservation Agriculture Facilitator
Organisation: Grain SA

VUYANI SOMYO
Position: Manager
Organisation: Nguni Cattle Development Project

MOSHE SWARTZ
Position: Deputy Director General
Organisation: Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR)

PETER TEMPLETON
Organisation: Goedgedacht Trust

WIM VAN AVERBEEK
Position: Research Professor
Organisation: Tshwane University of Technology
NICK VINK
Position: Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics
Organisation: University of Stellenbosch

FRANCIS WILSON
Position: Emeritus Professor of Economics
Organisation: University of Cape Town

JESSICA WILSON
Organisation: Environmental Monitoring Group

GUESTS

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Organisation: Interim Team Leader: Programme to Support Pro-Poor Policy Development, a partnership between the Presidency, the Republic of South Africa and the European Union

HAJJIRAH ESAU
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