



Utilizing small-scale commercial farming to enhance local economic development in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Background: Small scale commercial farming has been targeted to be one of the avenues for local economic development. However, there is little information to clearly identify who these farmers are which creates a daunting task in terms of managerial processes.

Purpose of study: Least is known regarding who small scale commercial farmers are which makes it difficult to utilize them to enhance economic development. The purpose of the study was to assess how small-scale commercial farming can enhance LED. The paper attempts to characterize small scale commercial farmers and identify their role in Local economic development in relation to the rural economy and assess the role of small-scale commercial farming towards improving local economic development in the rural areas.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A survey was conducted, and a multiple-stage sampling technique was used to select 217 small-scale commercial farmers. Quantitative data were collected using self-completion structured questionnaires from 217 small-scale commercial farmers in Vhembe District of Limpopo. IBM SPSS version 24 was used for data analysis and descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentiles were used in this regard.

Results/Findings: The computed results revealed that land ownership, size and market motives are critical variables to define small-scale commercial farming. At most 56% produce on community land, and 34% are on freehold. Subsequently, 88% of the respondents rely on mixed agriculture as the primary source of income and



are producing on an average land size of 8 hectares per farm. The findings further revealed that farmers sell at most 88% of their produce at local markets and 12% to national markets.

Recommendations: The study recommends that more agri-business training and financial support should be given to small-scale commercial farmers to address issues of regional economic development.

Managerial implication: This article demonstrated how small-scale commercial farming characterisation could assist in farming managerial processes such as establishing a typology of practical activities.

Keywords

Land ownership; Local Economic Development; Rural development; Small-scale commercial farmers.

JEL Classification: Q12

1. INTRODUCTION

Small-scale commercial farming is regarded as an integral part of local economic development as it helps the provision of employment, food security, income generation and basic livelihood strategy (Abdu-Raheem & Worth, 2011; Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), 2016; Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), 2017). This type of farming is predominantly known as farming on small pieces of land and producing for the market (Abdul-Salam & Phimister, 2016). Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) conducted a community survey in 2018, which indicated a significant increase in the number of small-scale commercial farmers (Statistics South Africa, 2015). Noticeably, the number of family farming evolving into commercial farming has increased, which shows that rural households are yielding to the objectives of the Malabo Declaration signed in Equatorial Guinea in 2014 under the theme "2014 African Year of Agriculture and Food Security" (Abdu-Raheem & Worth, 2011; Sutherland & Andrew, 2017). The declaration was mainly focused on accelerating agriculture growth and transformation for shared prosperity and improved livelihoods (FAO, 2017). As such, small-scale agribusinesses evolving from family farming have increased ever since 2014. Noting the commitment by African heads of states to invest around 10 percent of national income into agriculture, the future of the agriculture sector appears bright. While small-scale commercial farming is one of the targeted subsectors to achieve full employment, poverty reduction and increased food security, the least is known about these farmers (FAO, 2017). Different definitions have emerged from the existing literature. Hilson (2016) defines small-scale commercial farming according to land size usually 1-5 hectares and the use of old methods of farming (labour-intensive). At the same time, Zhigang (2017) defines small-scale farmers as the use of small pieces of land and the market motives. Furthermore, Sutherland

and Andrew (2017) define small-scale farming as farmers producing for household consumption who sells surplus produce. These definitions create a daunting task to identify small-scale commercial farmers and to differentiate the productive ones. This further makes it difficult to distil the role small-scale farmers play in local economic development. While issues around labour intensive farming speak to employment creation and the production of agriculture products speaks to food security, it is imperative to understand who these farmers are and what characterised them in terms of local economic development.

1.1. Objectives of the study

- i. To characterize small scale commercial farmers and identify their role in local economic development concerning the rural economy.
- ii. To assess the role of small-scale commercial farming towards improving local economic development in the rural areas.

1.2. Significance of the study

The need to characterize small-scale commercial farming and its role in rural economic development is fundamental for policy formulation such as managerial strategies that best suit productive agribusinesses. Agribusinesses should be formalized and have a formal structure that should be put in place for administrative purposes. The current article categorized small-scale commercial farming by assessing the gender, land size, type of farming and farming systems used. The variables, as mentioned earlier, are fundamental in determining the economic characteristics of small-scale commercial farmers. Mixed connotations regarding a standardized definition are limiting managerial implications in assisting small-scale commercial farming.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

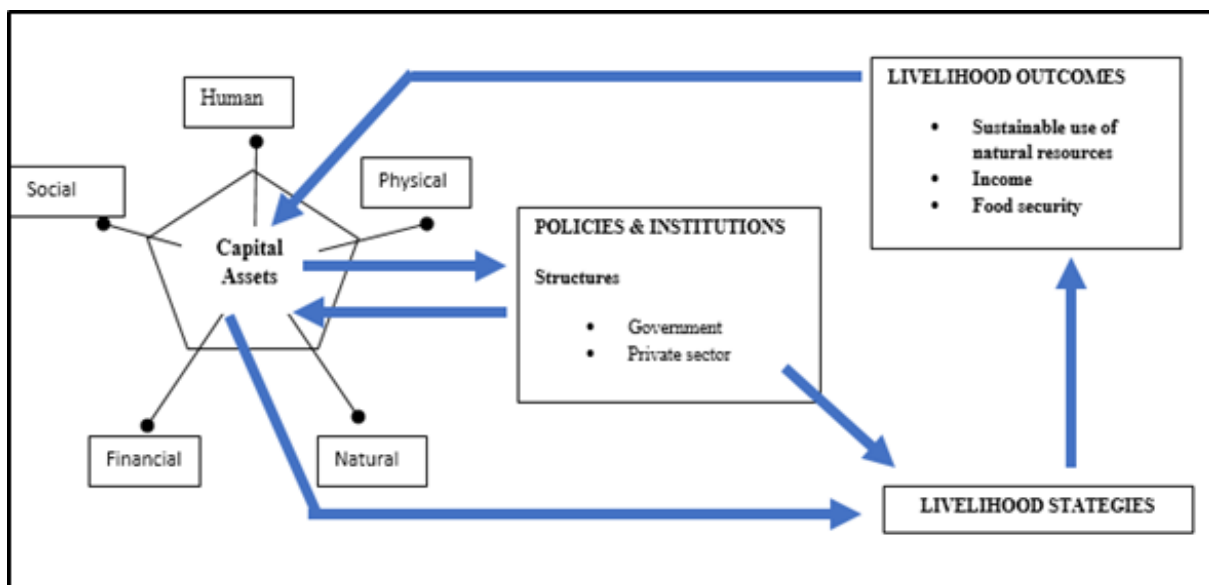
This section presents the framework adopted in the study. Subsequently, literature from different sources is discussed to have a general understanding of small-scale commercial farmers and their role in local economic development.

2.1. The sustainable livelihoods Framework

The study was grounded in the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF). The framework comprised of the capabilities, assets, activities and characteristics required for a means of living (Hilson, 2016). As such, small scale commercial farming is deemed a source of income and food, hence, sustainable using different assets, and activities. In line with the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, development which is people-centred, dynamic and sustainable is

usually associated with activities that are developmentally inclined. Given the fact that small-scale commercial farming is usually associated with activities that are human-centred, dynamic and sustainable in terms of food production. In line with Figure 1, small-scale farmers are perceived as owners of factors of production at the same time sources of human capital. As such, capital assets stem from small-scale farmers who then convert the resources such as land to productive means which is farming. In so doing, livelihood outcomes such as income generation and food security are the focal aspects of government and private sector policies formulation. In this regard, the study adopted the SFL adopted by Gibbens and Schoeman (2020) and is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework



Source: Gibbens and Schoeman (2020)

2.2. Understanding small-scale commercial farming: Global perspective

The concept of small-scale commercial farming is contingent on national and regional economic conditions, and it is difficult to have a single definition in an international context. What has considered small-scale commercial farming varies from one continent to another. A farmer who is using ancient farming methods instead of modern technology is regarded as small in Europe (Hilson, 2016). In Asia, a farmer who operates on small pieces of land and who is highly dependent on traditional methods is regarded as a small-scale farmer. This is not how small-scale commercial farming is defined in Africa. Methods of farming used and land size is mainly used to describe small-scale commercial farmers in Africa as defined by the Food and Agriculture Organisation United Nation (FAOUN, 2018). Farming in Asia and the

Pacific region is characterised by diverse family farming, predominantly small-scale and subsistence farmers (FAO, 2018). This region has the most significant number of family farms which accounts for at most 74 percent of the 'world's family farming (Lowder *et al.*, 2016). The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa's (AGRA) commonly used the term to describe a wide range of small-scale commercial farming, subsistence and peasant farming in Asia and the Pacific as family farming (AGRA, 2017). Due to diverse farming methods, family farming is adequately characterised by how agriculture is managed and operated by a family who relies on family capital, labour (AGRA, 2017).

Abdul-Salam and Phimister (2016) state that family farming in Asia is linked to agricultural production, which co-evolves with producing for family consumption and selling of surplus produce. These farmers produce on small pieces of land using ancient farming methods. These are significant characteristics used to define small-scale commercial farming (family farming) in Asia and the Pacific. Furthermore, as mentioned by the Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy (BFAP), several studies in the literature focus on land size and farming methods to define a wide range of small-scale commercial farmers in this region (BFAP, 2018). Since agriculture is regarded as the prime engine of growth in this region, family farming is barely profit orientation but rather focused to meet diverse households needs. As such, the scope of family farming in this region is a combination of livestock, fodder crops, grain crops, vegetables and forestry all focused on satisfying family needs. Family farming extends to the production of silkworms, poultry production and fish farming (Lowder *et al.*, 2016). As mentioned by Adenle *et al.* (2016) sustaining farm productivity is dimensional which are to meet diverse family needs such as food and income.

In Africa, small-scale farming forms part of most rural agricultural activities and is practised on small pieces of traditional land using traditional methods (Hasan, 2015). The FAO (2016) states that small-scale commercial farming is generally characterised by intensive labour and the use of animal traction, limited use of agrochemicals, technology and supply to the local or nearby marketplaces. Unlike large-scale commercial agriculture, small-scale commercial farming plays a dual role of being a source of domestic food security as well as income from the sale of excess farm produce (AGRA, 2017). Economically, small-scale commercial farming is considered a significant source of income and employment for rural dwellers since these farmers are labour-intensive. Furthermore, some farmers in Africa are highly dependent on government support for inclusive farming (Adenle *et al.*, 2016). This shows that small-scale commercial farmers are regarded as major players in food security and income generation. Countries such as Kenya, Nigeria, Tunisia, Uganda and Morocco have been supportive of

rural small-scale commercial farming over the past decade as mentioned by the New Partnership for Agriculture Development (NEPAD) in 2002 and Organisation for Economic Corporation and Development (OECD) in 2018 (Adenle *et al.*, 2016). Consequently, another challenge limiting defining these farmers is land ownership. Small-scale commercial farmers are known to be occupying small farms on freehold, and community land. Defining small-scale farming from an African context is primarily based on different characteristics such as land size and ownership, type of farming, farming methods and motive of farming. Defining small-scale commercial farming from that perspective limits policymakers in terms of quantifying the productive agribusiness from unproductive ones.

In South Africa, according to the Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fishery (DAFF), the number of smallholder farmers evolving into commercial farming has increased ever since 2014 (DAFF, 2016). The Agricultural census report in 2018 revealed that the number of commercial farmers increases by 61 percent from 57 980 in 2013 to 95 476 in 2018 in South Africa (Kirsten & Zyl, 2010). This follows the commitment of the government of South Africa to develop rural areas through farming, as stated in the Malabo Declaration as described by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR, 2016). In this regard, small-scale commercial farmers are perceived to be part of the solution for high rates of unemployment, poverty and food insecurity in rural areas (Aliber & Mdoda, 2015; Adenle *et al.*, 2016).

The Micro Agricultural Financial Institutions of South Africa (MAFISA), Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) and LIMA-Rural Development Foundation have been continuously supporting small-scale commercial farming enterprises in rural areas (DRDLR 2016; DAFF, 2018). As reported by DAFF (2018), small-scale agribusinesses received funding from the government, and the most fortunate provinces are Mpumalanga (30%), Kwazulu Natal (36%) and Limpopo (42%). Limpopo Province received more support amongst the provinces, and the number of small-scale agribusinesses initiated increased in the past five years (StatsSA, 2017). The agriculture census report revealed that in Limpopo province, mainly Waterberg and Vhembe District Municipality (VDM) contributed 34,93 percent and 29,86 percent respectively to the total Limpopo District Gross Domestic Product (Lowder *et al.*, 2016). This follows the upsurge of the number of small-scale commercial farmers evolving into agribusinesses, given the fact that agriculture still dominates in VDM.

The support given to this sub-sector to fulfil local economic development objectives makes it crucial to learn more about these farmers. Thus, to substantiate the role played by the government to reduce extreme poverty and unemployment in rural areas (Adenle *et al.*, 2016;

AGRA, 2017), it is fundamental to understand how economically viable small-scale commercial farmers are in rural economies. For these reasons, the primary focus of the study was to assess the utilizing of Small-Scale Commercial Farming to enhance local economic development in South Africa. Local Economic Development (LED) has taken the centre stage in development economics mainly in rural areas (Landsberg *et al.*, 2016; Meyer & Meyer, 2016). The processes by which local governments and businesses make use of resources to generate income sustainably and improve the welfare of local citizens has been a mandate in emerging countries (FAO, 2017). In the bid to alleviate poverty and unemployment, small-scale commercial farming has been included in the LED plans since this sub-sector can create jobs, securing livelihoods, manage VDM local resources and improve infrastructure (AGRA, 2017). Thus, small-scale commercial farming has taken the centre stage in enhancing LED in both developed and developing countries.

3. METHODOLOGY

Materials and methods used to achieve the objective of the study are presented in the following sections. The nature of the study, which is to characterise small-scale commercial farmers is presented in the article. The study area, participants and data analysis methods are presented.

3.1. Study area, participants and data analysis

The study was carried out in the four municipal areas of VDM (Vhembe District Municipality), Limpopo province. VDM is constituted by four local municipalities, namely Thulamela, Makhado, Collins Chabane, and Musina. Thulamela being the smallest municipality has the highest number of small-scale commercial farming, and it is the hub of the district where district municipalities are located (DAFF, 2017). A survey was conducted, and quantitative data were collected from 217 small-scale commercial farmers in VDM. A census of 217 participants was selected using a multiple-stage sampling method. VDM is constituted of four local municipalities which formed four clusters. Each cluster represented each local municipality in VDM. Strata were then formed guided by the type of farming, and the purposive sampling method was used to select 217 farmers determinedly. Questionnaires were distributed during farm and home visits. The small-scale farming database was used to locate farmers across VDM. Appointment for submission and collection of filled questionnaires were made before farm and home visits. Permission to collect data was obtained from the Ethics Committee at the University of Venda and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. Permission was also obtained from respondents in which they were requested to sign a

consent form before handing the questionnaire and confidentiality of the data to be collected ensured to the respondent. The collected data was captured and coded and analysed using IBM SPSS version 24 and excel version 2016. To characterise socio-economic characteristics, descriptive statistics were used in which frequencies and percentiles are presented in the following sections.

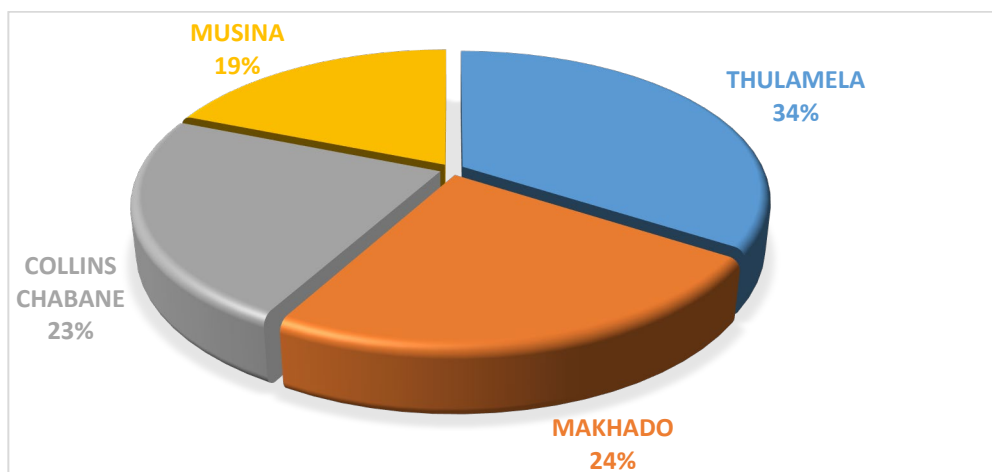
4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presented results on characterising small-scale commercial farming. The first section presented sample apportionment as per the municipalities.

4.1. Number of farmers per municipality

Figure 2 shows the sample size of 217 small-scale commercial farming. Thulamela had a total of 74 (34%) respondents, Makhado 52 (24%), Collins Chabane 50 (23%), and Musina 41 (19%) respectively. Thulamela municipality had the largest number of small-scale commercial farmers in VDM. The results support the Annual Agriculture Report published by DRDLR in 2016, which revealed that Thulamela municipality has the highest population of emerging agri-businesses. This supports a General Household Survey conducted by Statistics South Africa in 2015 revealed that Thulamela municipality has the most significant number of emerging small-scale farmers in Vhembe District (StatSA, 2015).

Figure 2: Sample apportionment from four municipalities



Source: Author's Survey (2020)

4.2. Small-scale commercial farmers demographic statistics

In the literature reviewed, the current study considered gender, age of the farmer and education level as critical variables to understand demographic statistics of small-scale

commercial farmers. The age of the farmer is usually associated with farm experience, and gender is usually associated with male dominance in this type of farming. As for education level, farm management is positively correlated with how educated a farmer is, hence, the study considered the variables as critical to describe these farmers. The collected data on demographic statistics for small-small commercial farmers are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Demographic statistics for small-scale farmers

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Proportion (%)
Gender	Male	113	52
	Female	104	48
Age (years)	≤35	15	7
	36 to 40	48	22
	41 to 50 s	54	25
	51 to 60	52	24
	61+	48	22
Education level	No education	7	3
	Matric	66	31
	Diploma	111	51
	Degree	33	15

Source: Author's Survey (2020)

Demographic results in Table 1 were fundamental for the researcher to understand the social background of small-scale commercial farmers in the Vhembe District. Gender is a significant variable as it gives a common understanding which is variably affected by any social or economic phenomenon in each community. Results in Table 1 shows that there is a partially fair representation of both genders (male 52% and female 48%). It can be concluded that both female and male farmers are participating in commercial farming in Vhembe District. Subsequently, age is often associated with experience, and elderly farmers are usually considered more experienced (Kapayi & Celliers, 2016). The computed results revealed that 7 percent of the respondents are youth in agri-business. Subsequently, at most 22 percent of the respondents represent farmers between the age group of 36 – 40 years, and 25 percent represent 41 - 50 years, 24 percent of the respondents are 51 - 60 years and 22 percent represented 61 years and above. In terms of education, at most 3 percent of the respondents were found not to have basic education, at most 31 percent matriculated and 51 percent acquired diplomas and 15 percent had degrees.

It is evident from the results in Table 1 that it is relatively fair of both gender representation in small-scale commercial farming. In a rural social condition, small-scale commercial farming is known to be dominated by male farmers due to various conditions such as most households are male-headed (Pienaar & Traub, 2015). In this regard, the results contradict the Quarterly

Household Survey conducted by DAFF (2016) which revealed that at most 80 percent of the small-scale farming is male-headed and are dominant in commercial farming in rural areas. The results are in line with the national call by the government for women empowerment can be attributed to commercial farming, considering the above-mentioned narrative (Pienaar & Traub, 2015).

The age of the farmer is usually associated with experience (Hilson, 2016) and the results in Table 1 revealed that most small-scale commercial farmers are between 41 to 60 years. This supports a common belief that elderly farmers have assets and are experienced in productive farming (Adenle *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, the results show that most of the participants are experienced farmers in commercial farming hence can contribute positively to the rural economy through productive farming.

Youth participation in small-scale commercial farming was found to be low, as indicated in Table 1. Considering the high youth unemployment rate in South Africa, the current study supports a report by DAFF (2016) which stated that youth are reluctant to start agro-businesses predominantly in rural areas since the majority are migrating to urban areas in search of work in other sectors. As such, youth participation in agro-business can reduce unemployment in rural areas at the same, contributing to the rural economy. Education, as one of the essential characteristics, is linked to human capital and result in productive farming. The results of the current study show that most education up to diploma level with a considerate number having tertiary degrees. In this regard, the article concludes that most farmers have basic knowledge, hence can run productive farming. The results support Agarwal (2018) report, which mentioned that education is crucial as it enables farmers to be productive and create a knowledge-based society. The results show that small-scale agri-businesses are run by educated farmers who are capable of positively contributing to rural economies. Table 2 presents the results on small-scale commercial farming socio-economic statistics.

Table 2: Small-scale commercial farming socio-economic statistics

Variables	Descriptors	Frequency	Proportion (%)
Farming type	Crop farming	50	23
	Mixed farming	115	53
	Livestock	52	24
Farming system	All year round	124	57
	Seasonal	93	43
Land ownership	Community land	122	56

	Leasing	22	10
	Freehold	73	34
Agriculture training	Trained	80	37
	Not-trained	137	63
A major source of income	Farming income	191	88
	Off-farm income	26	12
Average years in farming			12

Source: Author's Survey (2020)

Tabulated results in Table 2 show different statistics for small-scale commercial farmers in the VDM and the current study revealed that at most, 53 percent of the respondents are practising mixed farming. Subsequently, livestock producers constitute 24 percent, while crop producers accounted for 23 percent. Subsequently, at most 57 percent of the respondents practise farming throughout the year, which shows that farming is one of the primary sources of livelihood in rural areas. In terms of land ownership, the results revealed that 56 percent of farmers are using community land. A considerable portion (34%) of the farmers are farming on freehold land, and 10 percent are practising farming on leased land. Furthermore, the results in Table 2 show that most of the farmers (63%) do not have formal agriculture training, with only 37 percent having received formal agrarian training. It shows that most of these farmers still need training.

The socio-economic conditions in rural areas call for strategic agriculture initiatives for the development of the sector. As noted above, mixed farming is the most practised agri-business, which is regarded as risk-averse since farmers can diversify the risk between crop and livestock production. As stated by McCaskill (2017), mixed farmers experience less risk than crop or livestock producers since the risk can be spread through crop and livestock production. In terms of the period of farming, the results in the current study support Pienaar and Traub (2015) and DAFF (2016), who stated that most small-scale commercial farmers are all-year-around producers. The article concludes that mixed farming is the most preferred type of agri-business due to risk-averse and more profitable than pure crop or livestock farmers.

Agriculture training is well-thought-out to be a cornerstone for productive farming (Carlucci & Schiuma, 2018). Similarly, Ferreira (2018) investigated the difference between trained and untrained farmers and the results revealed that trained farmers were more productive and organised compared to those without training. The current study revealed that the majority of the respondents are not trained; hence, training these farmers can lead to more productivity which can contribute positively to rural economies. Source of income was found to be a significant characteristic in defining small-scale commercial farming. This is in line with Pienaar

and Traub (2015), Biam *et al.* (2016) and Carlucci and Schiuma (2018) who mentioned that the majority of rural farmers rely on agri-business as a significant source of income. In this regard, the current study further assessed land ownership in terms of gender and market imperatives.

4.3. Land ownership and gender statistics

Land ownership is one of the contemporary issues discussed in South Africa. Table 3 show results regarding land ownership against the gender of the respondents. The results show that most small-scale commercial farmers (55%) are practising farming on community land. From this proportion, 27 percent are female farmers and 28 percent are male farmers. This shows that both male and female farmers do not own land in use. Subsequently, at most 34 percent are farming on freehold land, and there was partially balanced gender representation. The results of the study support Ramutsindela *et al.* (2016) who stated that much of households in rural areas are living on community land and farming on community land limiting infrastructure development which weighs down progressive small-scale commercial farming. Small-scale commercial farmers have been recognised as potential contributors to food security and employment (Agarwal, 2018). Without land rights (ownership), it becomes a daunting task to invest and convert community land into productive, fertile land which can be beneficial to rural economies. Table 3 presents gender statistics using land ownership as a control variable.

Table 3: Gender and land ownership crosstabulation

Gender	Community Land	Leasing	Freehold	Freq
FEMALE	59	11	36	106
	27%	5%	17%	
MALE	62	11	38	111
	28%	5%	18%	
TOTAL	55%	10%	35%	N=217

* Asymp Sig: 0.002

Source: Author's Survey (2020)

4.4. Market access

The results in Table 4 show that 76 percent of crop farmers sell much of their produce in local markets, and 24 percent extended to national markets. In terms of mixed small-scale commercial farmers, 85 percent of the farmers sell only in the location markets, and 15 percent extend to the national markets. As for livestock, small-scale commercial farmers, 80 percent are selling in local markets, and 12 percent are selling nationally (Table 4).

Table 4: Farming type and market access statistics

Farming type	Local markets	National markets	International markets	Total
Crop farmers	38	12	0	50
	76%	24%	0%	
Mixed farmers	96	17	0	115
	85%	15%	0%	
Livestock farmers	46	6	0	52
	88%	12%	0%	
Total				N = 217
Asymp Sig: 0.000				

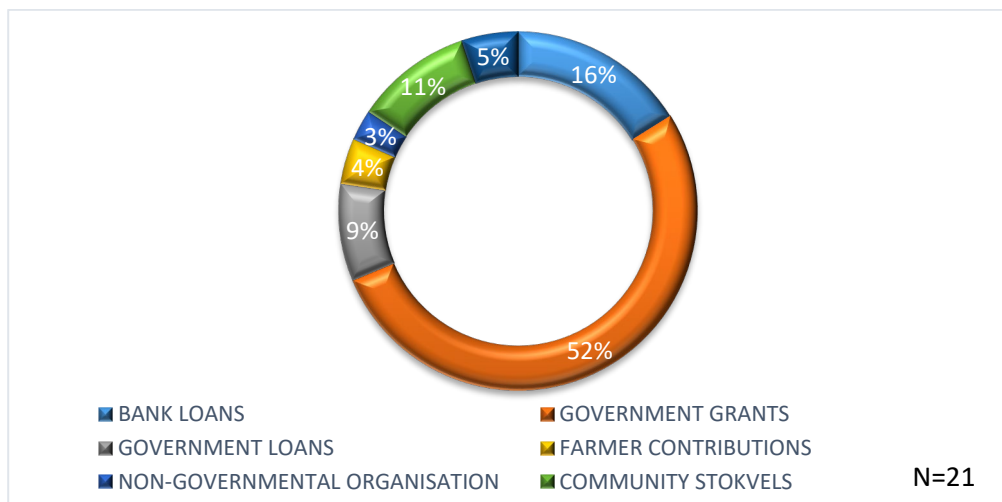
Source: Author's Survey (2020)

The researcher concluded that much of the produces by many of these farmers are sold in local markets. This shows that access to local markets make it easy for these farmers to add to the food supply for local consumption. Access to markets is very critical for business growth (Loeper *et al.*, 2016). As such, there is a need to train these farmers on how to penetrate national and international markets. Correspondingly, if small-scale commercial farmers are linked with buyers, they can contribute to food security and create more employment hence contributing to rural economies. The researcher further investigated the source of funding for small-scale commercial farmers, and the results are presented in Figure 3.

4.5. Source of funding for small-scale commercial farmers

Figure 2 shows the results for 217 small-scale commercial farmers. At most 52 percent of the funding comes from the government, 16 percent from banks, 11 percent from community Stokvel and 9 percent from government loans. The results show that the government is the primary source of funding for small-scale commercial growth in rural areas.

Figure 3: Sources of funding for small-scale commercial farmers



Source: Author's Survey (2020)

Access to funding is fundamental for business expansion and growth (FAO, 2017; Sutherland & Andrew, 2017). The results support Khapayi and Celler (2016), who stated that the government is a significant player in supporting agri-businesses. Considering the fact, the South African government committed to investing 10 percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) into agriculture shows that rural is getting financial support from the government hence may improve their productivity and contribute to local economic development.

5. CONCLUSION

The researcher concludes that there is gender balance in small-scale commercial farming in rural areas. Despite the perception that male farmers dominated rural farming over the past decade, the narration has changed. The results in the current study revealed that the number of female farmers has increased as compared to a Community Survey conducted by StatsSA in 2017. Subsequently, land ownership is one of the most contentious issues in South Africa and stems from being also combative in rural areas. The mainstream of small-scale commercial farmers is farming on community land, and others are on freehold terrestrial. The study concludes that the lack of land rights is limiting these farmers to develop the farmers because they do not own the land under cultivation. Ultimately, the study concludes that land size; methods of farming and market motives are crucial variables in identifying small-scale commercial farming in rural areas.

The study concludes that the number of women participating in agribusiness has increased in VDM. Furthermore, most of the participants in the study are elderly; hence the study concludes that youths participating in agribusinesses are few. Because these farmers have access to

land and are practising different forms of farming throughout the year shows that they can play a pivotal role in improving local economic development in rural areas. This speaks to improving their farming activities to income-generating farming, which may also extend to employment creation and food security. As such, these farmers may contribute towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2 and 8 which speaks to zero hunger, ending extreme poverty and empowering women hence achieving decent work and economic growth. Ultimately, since these farmers can produce and sell in both local and national markets reflect a congruent avenue to achieve the Zero hunger challenge and Agenda 2063 in terms of sustainable food production and job security. In line with the above conclusions, the managerial components of such farmers require an inclusivity approach hence the recommendations are presented below.

6. RECOMMENDATION

The current study recommends that the government should prioritise small-scale commercial farming in rural areas through the provision of subsidies and access to credit. Access to productive land and agri-preneurship training should be offered to small-scale commercial farmers. The training should focus on entrepreneurial skills on-farm management (land usage) and equip these farmers with managerial skills which are fundamental for farm productivity. The training should also include marketing skills and stakeholder mobilisation strategies. Marketing skills are crucial for creating new pathways for small-scale commercial farming enterprises development. The study further recommends that more youth-oriented incentives should be introduced in rural areas to attract youth participation in agribusinesses. Reducing youth unemployment is essential for local economic development since the majority are considered technologically advanced. Ultimately, since small-scale commercial farming is constituted of the diversity of farmers, Agricultural policies should be based on current evidence and should also be based on regular assessments. This improves the readjustment of relevant policies for the development of small-scale commercial farming

7. LIMITATIONS

The study made use of small-scale commercial farmers who were not readily available during the data collection phase due to other commitments. However, the use of a survey in which structured questionnaires were used necessitated farmers to provide the needed data at their convenient time though the process was a bit long. The study area being Vhembe District is constituted of four municipalities and two of them (Collins Chabane and Makhado) have demarcation challenges. It was difficult to geographically classify some of the participants.

However, the researcher managed to use geolocation in the event of demarcation challenges. In terms of future studies, further investigation on if there are any significant difference in socio-economic characteristics between female and male farmers in agribusinesses is recommended. Also, a detailed comparative study between the role small-scale commercial and large-scale commercial farming play in local economic development is recommended.

8. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

In the context of small-scale commercial farming characterisation as a strategy to develop agribusinesses in rural areas, assist in creating different managerial strategies. This study demonstrated how small-scale commercial farming characterisation could assist in farming managerial processes such as establishing a typology of practical activities. The context of the study can provide further features in small-scale commercial farming intervention and innovation strategies. As such, the professionalization of small-scale agribusiness is an integral strategy for job creation, poverty alleviation and a means to encourage the start-up of local businesses in farming. Generally, the idea is to develop a range of productive small-scale farming businesses aiming to attract youth participation in this subsector to lift them out of poverty and unemployment. Thus, professionalizing small-scale commercial farming should be conducted with a focus on empowering youth and women specifically. In this regard, policy objectives need to be adapted bearing in mind the demographic and economic paths of each rural setup to establish the conditions needed to develop small-scale commercial farming to improve its potential contribution to food security, employment and local economic development planning.

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