

**EFFECTIVENESS OF FARMER GROUPS AS TOOLS OF EXTENSION SERVICE
DELIVERY: THE CASE OF MAKHUDUTHAMAGA-SEKHUKHUNE (LIMPOPO
PROVINCE)**

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DELIVERY: THE CASE OF MAKHUDUTHAMAGA-SEKHUKHUNE (LIMPOPO
PROVINCE)**

by
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DECLARATION

I, Papie Harry Mashiane, identity number [REDACTED] student number 9932305, declare that this dissertation: **Effectiveness of farmer groups as tools of extension service delivery: The case of Makhuduthamaga-Sekhukhune (Limpopo Province)** submitted to the Central University of Technology, Free State for the degree MAGISTER TECHNOLOGIAE: AGRICULTURE is my own independent work and that all sources used and quoted have been duly acknowledged by means of complete references; and complies with the Code of Academic Integrity, as well as other relevant policies, procedures, rules and regulations of the Central University of Technology; and has not been submitted before to any institution by myself or any other person in fulfilment (or partial fulfilment) of the requirements for the attainment of any qualification. I also disclaim this dissertation in the favour of the Central University of Technology, Free State.

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Date

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<u>Abbreviation</u>	<u>Description</u>
BFG	Broiler Farmer Group
DFG	Dairy Farmer Group
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FSR/E	Farming System Research/Extension
GFG	Grain Farmer Group
GPs	Group Promoters
IRD	Integrated Rural Development
LFG	Layer Farmer Group
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PEA	Participatory Extension Approach
SASAE	South African Society for Agricultural Extension

T&V

Training and Visit

VFG

Vegetable Farmer Group

ABSTRACT

Key words: *Farmer group dynamics, extension service delivery, farmer group formation, community development.*

Abstract: Small-scale and subsistence farmers in general lack knowledge and information as a result of limited personal contact at grassroots level with extension workers. Therefore, the formation of farmer groups needs to be encouraged in most rural areas as tools of extension delivery. The value of farmer groups for quality decision making and generating of new ideas is well known, and therefore, the use of group contact may accelerate capacity building and empowerment to subsistence farmers.

The problem under investigation is the effectiveness of farmer groups as tools of extension delivery in Makhuduthamaga in Sekhukhune District. The investigation seeks to establish the factors that influence the effectiveness of the farmer group in Makhuduthamaga local municipality. This study was conducted in the Makhuduthamaga local municipality in Sekhukhune District. Data was gathered through two questionnaires, one for farmers and one for extension workers. The study applied quantitative methodology, cluster sampling and non-probability sampling methods, and used field interviews with structured questionnaires.

The study found that there are many stakeholders involved in the formation of farmer groups, such as NGOs, social welfare and extension workers, and the initiation by the different stakeholders has an influence on the development of the groups. Most of the farmer groups were initiated by NGOs, the reason being the financial support offered. The effectiveness of the selected farmer groups on Makhuduthamaga municipality is influenced by group dynamic factors. These factors include group size

and gender composition, updating of the constitution, and the frequency of group meetings.

The respondents highlighted the fact that there is a poor relationship within the groups, poor leadership, misuse of funds, lack of knowledge and division in the groups. There is a culture of not believing and/or not trusting the local people, and it is difficult to disclose information.

The number of extension workers is still small in relation to the size of the farming population to be served. Stakeholders will learn from the study that the formation of farmer groups should serve the interests of the farmers, not of the institutions. The training institutions should base the training of extension workers on the needs of the farmers. The farmers should strive for self-reliance in order to sustain their farming enterprises. Extension workers should be formally trained on group dynamics, because agriculture in rural areas is about people working together. Government should minimise the top down approach and institutionalise the participatory extension approach methodology.

CHAPTER 1

1. BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Limpopo Province is one of the nine provinces of South Africa and is situated in the far north of the country. It is composed of twenty-five local municipalities and five district municipalities. In the northern part of the province, Musina and Mutale local municipalities are situated alongside the Limpopo River, which form the boundary between South Africa and Zimbabwe. Greater Giyani, Ba-Phalaborwa and Greater Tubatse local municipalities are situated on the eastern side of the province, sharing a boundary with Mpumalanga Province. Elias Motsoaledi, Greater Marble Hall and Bela-Bela local municipalities are in the southern part of the province and border on Gauteng Province, while Thabazimbi and Lephalale local municipalities, to the west, share a border with North West Province and Botswana.

Vhembe district is in the far north and has four local municipalities. This district is mostly populated by the Venda tribe, and the primary agricultural activity is the growing of fruits and vegetables. Mopani district is situated in the north east of the province with five local municipalities and is mostly populated by the Tsonga speaking people; its primary agricultural activity is also growing vegetables and fruits. Capricorn district is in the middle of the province: this district includes Polokwane city with five local municipalities which are populated mainly by the Pedi speaking people, whose primary agricultural activities are maize and livestock farming. Sekhukhune district the focus of this study, is situated in the

southern part of the province. The five local municipalities in this district are populated by the Pedi speaking people, and the primary agricultural activities are sorghum and some maize farming. Waterberg district is situated to the west of the province, with six local municipalities and populated mostly by the Ndebele and Tswana tribes. The primary agricultural activities in this district are livestock and game farming, and the growing of sunflowers. Makhuduthamaga local municipality has an estimated population of 262 912 and is projected to grow to 300 206 by 2011, as reported by the Bureau for Market Research at the University of South Africa (UNISA, 2001). Makhuduhtamaga local municipality is divided into 31 wards and has 146 settlements with an average household size of about five people, with an average of 2006 residents per settlement (K.M. Associates Town Planners, 2002). Makhuduthamaga is a rural area, characterised by a high level of poverty. It has been declared a nodal district, and the populace depends on agriculture for social and economic sustenance and development (Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality report, 2005). Makhuduthamaga is comprised of approximately 209 695 hectares, with about 188 410 hectares available for development for agricultural purposes. The district has 66% of the land is of low potential for agricultural production, while the rest is considered as moderate in terms of agricultural potential (Statistics South Africa, 2001). Agriculture contributes less than 10% to the economy of the Sekhukhune district, with subsistence farming practiced on 70% of the area. (Greater Sekhukhune District Muninicipality report, 2005). The level of education within the municipality is generally low, with only about 11% of the population having achieved Grade 12 level at school (Statistics South Africa, 2001).



Sekhukhune District

Figure 1.1 Geographical location of Sekhukhune District

1.2 AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES IN THE MAKHUDUTHAMAGA MUNICIPALITY OF SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT

Makhuthamaga local municipality is well known for the farming of sorghum, maize, millet, legumes, vegetables and livestock (Diale, 2005:1). In the north-eastern part of the municipality sorghum is grown, and the product is marketed locally at R500 per 80kg bag. The farmers use indigenous seed, which is palatable to the members of the local community and therefore mainly used for cooking porridge. Only 14% of individual farmers plant improved seed for the external market. The dry land farming is being practiced on 90% of the total crop production area, with 10% area under irrigation alongside the Olifants River. The area is not well planned, which makes it difficult to determine the area allocated per household for residential use and for arable land.

The irrigation schemes include Mogalatjane, Krokodil Heuwel, Voggelstruiskoppies, Mphane, Makgwabe, Malope, Goedgedacht, Veeplaats, Wonderboom, Vlakplaas and Tswaing schemes and cover 1539ha. Each household owns 1,2ha irrigation land, which is too small for commercial crop production, and thus too meager for households to sustain their livelihood. From the early sixties until 1984, farmers were using furrow irrigation system for the production of maize during summer and wheat during winter, as prescribed by policy during that stage and several meetings were held with farmers. The former government introduced sprinkler and centre pivot systems in 1984/85 and farmers operated as groups using the centre pivots. The farmers were persuaded by the management of former government and extension workers to plant cotton in all irrigation schemes in Makhuduthamaga local municipality, although they were not happy with the

entire set up (verbally by Phakoago & Rachidi, 1985). Wrong Extension Approach, whereby farmer's projects that are conceptualized by departmental staff! Lack of farmer ownership will, always make them reluctant to engross themselves in activities. Since 2004/2005 that the Department of Agriculture introduced the floppy irrigation system as part of the Revitalization of Small Scale Irrigation Schemes (RESIS) in Limpopo Province, but the irrigation system has never been maintained. This abject neglect has led to 11 irrigation schemes becoming dysfunctional. Moreover, farmers found it problematic to manage the new irrigation systems properly without expert support (Limpopo Department of Agriculture, 2003).

The vegetable farmers in the local municipality are organised in groups and they farm approximately 177 ha. Vegetable production is done on a small scale in the irrigation schemes because of the scarcity of water. The community food gardens were introduced in the early eighties, using a water harvesting approach for irrigation purposes. Majority of farmers grow vegetable on 0,2 hectares; only a few reach 4 hectares. The farmers work in groups due to scarcity of resources such as land and water as indicated before that land scarcity is a problem in Makhuduthamaga local municipality (Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality Report. 2005).

Sixteen broiler enterprises, with an average of two broiler houses and 1000 broilers per enterprise, are active in the area. Livestock farming is unorganised and in a crisis situation due to lack of sufficient grazing throughout the year. Current practices such as overstocking and allowing livestock to graze between arable lands and around residential areas are some of the challenges facing Makhuduthamaga local municipality. The poor

condition of livestock is also a challenge. According to the culture in the province, every adult man should have few animals as a token of status, and that was exactly how the researcher and his peers grew up within the communities in Limpopo province. This creates serious challenges to the tenure system in which land is communally owned and where free livestock grazing occurs (Matata *et al.*, 2008:70).

1.3 FARMER GROUPS IN THE MAKHDUTHAMAGA OF SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT

The purpose of forming farmer groups in Makhuduthamaga local municipality is to embark on farming as the major source of income is subsistence farming is the most common economic activity in the area. Smallholder farming cover approximately 30% of provincial land surface area and is generally characterised by low level production technology and small sized farms (approximately 1,5 hectares per farmer). The agriculture production is primarily for subsistence and little is produced as marketable surplus (Strategic Plan/APP 2005-2010:10). There are farmers who own only a piece of arable land and few goats, sheep and cattle. People are searching for ways and means for raising their income within their limited resources available for agricultural production (Graeter Sekhukhune District Municipality report, 2005).

The formation of farmer groups is considered to be one of the most important ways in which farmers can improve agricultural production and increase household income, because they know their strength and weaknesses. The farmers develop a sense of responsibility and confidence and able to demand services tailored to their felt needs (FAO, 1999:2). The objective of forming farmer groups is to fulfill the needs of individuals,

institutions and the farmer group itself. Farmer groups have to be articulate and clearly updated on issues affecting farmers as well as those of the agricultural sector, which have impact on livelihoods of the members (Mutunga, 2008:2), and such different approaches have been used to initiate the formation of such groups in Makhuduthamaga.

According to Manny (2009:3) the generic role of government in agricultural development is facilitation, the provision of technical advice and information, and the enabling of support instruments and an institutional environment. The extension worker in Makhuduthamaga local municipality should initiate farmer groups with the aim of transmitting information to a number of people within a limited time and with minimal costs, because it need more days and more resources to visit individual farmers and give them technical advice. The extension worker should create awareness within the community about the importance of forming farmer groups, and to conduct basic training within the community on the advantages of working in groups (Manny, 2009:5).

Authorities in the Department of Agriculture initiated the formation of farmer groups in the upper Flag Boshielo irrigation schemes in 2005 to 2008, with the aim of sharing resources such as the floppy irrigation system and negotiating with white farmers to assist them. The composition of the group, interest of members, size of the group and the farming specialisations were not considered, however, and this created a challenge which affected the effectiveness of the farmer groups. The farmers who were owning 1,2 hectares and grouped themselves according to villages i.e. Phetwane, Mogalatjane, Krokodil Heuwel and Setlaboswane irrigation schemes protested against this approach but still groups were formed against their wishes.

The Department of Health and Social Welfare initiated some farmer groups in Makhuduthamaga local municipality in order to address poverty issues in identified households. The identified families were given food parcels according to a scheduled programme and the health officers organised them into groups to enable them to establish enterprises such as a bakery, vegetable gardens and broiler production. The objective of forming groups was to encourage community members to produce food for themselves. You own something if you invest in it because you do not want to lose your investment. They came for food parcels offered not for growth.

Governments departments, development agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have recognised that the “top down” approach characteristic of traditional development strategies has largely failed to reach the rural poor (FAO, 1991:1). People participation implies active involvement in the development of the rural people, particularly in disadvantaged groups that form the mass of the rural population and have been excluded from the development process (FAO, 1991:1).

The subsistence farmers in general lack knowledge and information as a result of limited personal contact with extension workers at grassroots level. Formation of farmer groups in most rural areas is carried out when farming activity is established, and is accepted as effective extension delivery. Bembridge (1993:93) emphasises that to reach a large number of farmers and to make any significant impact, it is essential to use mainly group methods of contact and Dúvel (2004:45) also emphasized that, the value of farmer groups for quality decision making and generation of new ideas is well known, and therefore, the use of group contact may accelerate capacity building and empowerment amongst

subsistence farmers. Collective action in rural development has always been fundamental for human society, and plays a particularly prominent role in rural development programmes (Meinzen-Dick et al., 2004:4). Formation of cooperatives was introduced in the early 1960s in developed countries, with little attention given to what types of activities were best managed at community level (Meinzen-Dick *et al.*, 2004:4). Meinzen-Dick *et al.* (2004:7) define collective action as the involvement of a group of people with a shared interest within the group; it involves some kind of common action which works in pursuit of that shared interest.

People are encouraged to envision and initiate active process, where people take initiatives and action by own thinking and deliberation. Close conceptual and operational links exist between people's participation and people's organisations, such as farmer groups (FAO, 1991:1). Active participation of rural people can only be brought about through self-help groups whose primary aim is the pursuit of their members' social and economic objectives (FAO, 1991:1). FAO experiences (FAO, 1991:2) have shown that through participatory programmes and activities it is possible to mobilise local knowledge and resources for self-reliant development, and that such programmes and activities reduce the cost to government in terms of providing developmental assistance.

According to FAO (1991:2), the promotion of people's participation in rural development can be operationalised if certain conditions are met, like public awareness exists of the benefits of using participatory approaches to rural development, and that key policy and decision-makers within government and other development agencies such as FAO take action in this area; that the self management capacities of rural people's organisations are

sufficient to sustain such initiatives; and that the legal and policy environment existing within the country is favourable to the participatory, collective self-help initiatives of rural people.

FSRE is a strategy for integrating farmers into the research process and for providing feedback from farmers to research and policy (Apantaku, Oloruntoba & Fakoya, 2003:48). The participatory approach is more effective when farmers operate as a farmer group, and more particularly as a commodity group (Apantaku, Oloruntoba & Fakoya, 2003:48). The participatory farmer group approach is effective since it is client-driven, where farmers' knowledge, needs, criteria, and preference are taken into account in decision making about technical innovations (Apantaku, Oloruntoba & Fakoya, 2003:49). Involvement of farmer groups in the defining of research agenda, conducting of trials and evaluating of results provide an opportunity for adoption of technologies which are more suitable to farmers' circumstances.

There are many factors that motivate the formation of farmer groups, including the efficient communication, transmitting and sharing of information as a study group or focus group (Stevens and Terblanche:2004:39). Stevens and Terblanche (2004:40) mention that group efficacy has a strong influence over the characteristics of group life, including the length of time that the group members are willing to work together.

The farmer group provides farmers with a platform for exchanging experiences on technical innovations, linking with service providers for supply of inputs, marketing and negotiating with administrative and leadership structures like kgošii (local chief), ward

councillors and municipality authorities for technical and social services (Novafrica, 2007:12).

In 63 villages situated in five districts of Limpopo, farmer groups acted as umbrella organisations for networking and exchanging of information. This interaction resulted in the formation and registration of a provincial body, the Limpopo Smallholder Farmers' Association to represent small-scale farmers in Limpopo (Mannya, 2009:15).

Farmer group members have to appreciate that each member has unique knowledge, information and skill, therefore each member is enriched towards the achievement of individual and collective goals (Mannya, 2009:16). Farmer groups help individuals to learn that nobody knows everything and this creates the need to learn from each other (Novafrica, 2007:13). Farmers who are not willing to contribute verbally, they will contribute through action during activities, by giving them chance to demonstrate their knowledge without asking them. According to Kilpatrick *et al.* (2002:2) behaviour change involves more than technical and financial considerations. Values and attitudes must change before behaviour changes and it has to seem 'right' to act in a new way (Kilpatrick *et al.* 2002:2). The farmers who are involved in farmer and community organisations are more likely to adopt changes in practices. The farmers who participate in agricultural and community organisations are more likely to adopt innovations because, not only do they become aware of a wider variety of new practices, they also have the opportunity to test and change values and attitudes.

Personal beliefs, values, opinions and attitudes, and individual capacity and skills to assess options and make appropriate decisions influence adoption of new practices. The

relationships which stakeholders have with each other, and group members with the wider community, generally reinforce these behavioural norms (Kilpatrick *et al.*, 2002:2).

Research in agriculture suggests that learning in groups is effective for the majority of farmers (Kilpatrick *et al.*, 2002: 3). Education and training in groups is able to influence change through the delivery of new knowledge and skills and providing opportunities for interaction with peers. Stevens and Terbelanch (2006) mentions that it was learned that when farmers are questioned about extension they report that a lack of practicality of advice is one of their main concerns, suggesting a need for a dialogue between farmers and extension workers.

Leadership is a crucial factor in group dynamics, requiring an attitude of working together, which includes communication, conflict resolution and group decision making. Leadership is more effective if is shared among a number of players who have complementary skills. The type of leadership that builds effective collaborative activity in groups has been described as an enabling leadership (Kilpatrick *et al.*, 2002:4). Enabling leadership empowers others to take on variety of roles, including leadership roles.

Formation of farmer groups in developing countries, particularly in rural areas, is nevertheless hindered by factors such as inefficient communication channels (Bembridge, 1993:22). Efficient and effective communication channels must be developed for the steady and regular flow of information between different levels of the organization (Mutunga, 2008:6). This will also ensure accurate reflection of each member's needs and will maintain a sense of progress towards attaining specific objectives (Mutunga, 2008:6).

There are stakeholders who initiate the formation of farmer groups for other reasons such as funders with a need for quick results, without determining the type or size of a project (Mutimba, 1997:149). Such activities could have negative effects on group sustainability, as recipient organisations may be forced to accept the ideas and development concepts of the funder (Mutimba, 1997:149). The need for external assistance may emerge under these condition and sudden drop in income or an insufficiently large financial base with which to exploit new opportunities may necessitate such assistance. Development assistance could divert a farmer group from its long-term objectives. Theoretically, the outside funding should be accepted only if locals have asked for it to complements their funding shortfalls.

Sustainable support is the kind of funding that does not create dependency. Development assistance is a temporary action which acts as a bridge between the present and a better future (Mutimba, 1997:149). Sustained support should not affect the recipient's organisation by destroying economic incentives (Mutimba, 1997:23). To succeed in agricultural extension, extension workers need to understand farming communities fully, as well as the conditions and environment in which small- scale farmers operate. For many reasons the record of agricultural production in the developing areas of Southern Africa compares unfavourably with that in the commercial farming sector. The subsistence farming sector in Southern Africa has certain common features such as a general lack of institutional support and local leadership; the village organisation is often not developed, small-scale farmers collectively have little to say, and inadequate infrastructural development and farming operations are undertaken by women and older men.

The extension worker needs to capacitate community members and build trusting relationship with a community (Novafrica, 2007:20). In order to access the community, there is a need to identify local organisations and leadership and to establish channels of communication (Novafrica, 2007:20). The roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders must be clearly explained so that the majority can support the initiative of change. Through full participation of the community stakeholders become aware of their strengths and weaknesses and start articulating the services they require to change their lives (Henning & Hagmann, 2002:29).

Provision of agricultural extension and other agricultural support services are mainly the responsibility of government in Limpopo province. Extension services through full farmer participation should allow farmers to address their problems and participate in the generation of information required for decision making. A sound legal framework within which the farmer group can function is an essential prerequisite, and establishing linkages with the overall administrative system is also essential. Changes in the legal framework and policies will affect the development of the farmer group, and these should be updated every now and then in order to influence the policy change.

According to Bembridge (1993: 95) the ratio of extension workers to farmers is between 1:500 and 1:2000, which makes it possible to reach only a small fraction of farmers through regular individual farmer visits. In order to reach a large number of farmers and make a significant impact on increasing agricultural production, it is essential to use group extension methods through efficient farmer groups such as farmer associations: beef, dairy, sheep, goats, poultry, etc, etc.

There are various institutions embarking on agricultural development, and which apply different extension approaches. The extension system can therefore be either centrally decided or locally decided by farmers. The extension approach or style should therefore fit the programme goals and pursue the overall goals of technology transfer and rural development. This could be done by the strengthening of self-reliant farmers' organisations, increased and improved interaction between farmers and service institutions, and sustainable improvement of agricultural practices (Mutimba, 1997). Kumuk and Van Growder (1996:4) are of the opinion that multidisciplinary extension teams who live and work in the community villages, focusing on local problems, using farming systems and farmer-participatory methodologies, are required. This will enable extension workers, farmers, back-stoppers and researchers to collaborate in the process of mutual decision making with regard to problem analysis, solution planning, implementing of activities and evaluation of results.

The quality of a farmer group depends strongly on the relevance of the group's objectives to its members, especially through active participation in policy formulation. Farmers are more interested in extension services that can help them solve their current problems, which may include poverty and poor agricultural practices, and to improve social services.

The government's strategy is to empower people at grassroots level, and to encourage the formation of farmer groups as instruments for the realisation of poverty reduction (Wambura *et al.*, 2007:41). The effective farmer group is able to network with all gender groups within the community and have access to the available resources such as production units (Wambura *et al.*, 2007:41). . Stevens and Terblanche (2006:3) emphasise

that the essential characteristic of an effective group is that members take ownership of decisions and planning within the group.

Hall (cited by Stevens & Terblanche, 2007:3) defines a mature group as “a self-directed, self-controlled body in which every member including quit one’s, carries his part of the responsibilities for developing and executing the group’s plan.” Once the group is effective, it will not only be better able to articulate its needs in respect of agricultural and social services as a collective entity, but will also be better able to represent itself on a collective basis *vis à vis* service providers and authorities (Ngomane, 2005:201). Further, Kilpatrick *et al.* (2002:3) reported that farmer groups are widely regarded as being highly effective in supporting fundamental changes to farm management practices. The group members build social capital as they learn together and develop as a group.

Group contact is one of the extension approaches used as a tool to meet farmers. The role of the extension worker in the formation of a farmer group is to promote inter-group contacts and cooperation, i.e. linkages, encouraging an environment conducive to farmer group formation, explaining the advantages and disadvantages that farmer group formation could have for their groups (FAO, 1999:17).

There are various group contact approaches that could be used to capacitate farmers. Farmers’ days, for instance, are usually large gatherings organised to demonstrate farming practices, results of trials and new farming tools. The extension worker will support the organising committee and the farmer on whose land the farmers’ day meeting will be held.

Demonstration is a method by means of which a group of farmers, who are already convinced about a new practice, are shown how to use an agriculture technique in a step by step manner, while a conference is a meeting of a number of people where participants are usually a close-knit group who consult in a formal fashion on problems to which they give serious consideration. Touring is another group approach, where a group visits a farm or research station which is of interest, for first-hand observation. The extension worker and the farmers usually makes arrangements and organise suitable location for the majority of farmers.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Agriculture is the key sector for achieving the dream of economic advancement and poverty alleviation in Africa (Ngomane, 2005:201). The sector provides 60% of all employment on the African continent and constitutes the backbone of most rural economies. However, recent studies of world poverty single out Africa as the continent upon which the numbers of people who are malnourished and living in poverty have risen most rapidly in recent decades, despite a historical record of scattered successes in various parts of the region. The linear model of transferring technology has been identified as a weak link in most national agricultural research systems (Ngomane, 2005:201).

Individual farmer contact has been demonstrated as the most effective way of developing agriculture (Bembridge, 1993:95) but the ratio of farmers to extension worker ranges between five hundred and two thousand farmers to one extension worker in developing countries, it is clear that only a small fraction of farmers can be reached. In economically

advanced countries, the average ratio of extension worker to farmers is 1:350 while in developing countries the ratio is 1:500 (Adams, 1984:2).

The general poor performance of farmer groups is common, particularly in rural areas where poverty is a challenge. Failing to satisfy the felt needs of members and not generating positive benefits for members leads to unsuccessful and unsustainable farmer groups. It has been mentioned that the economic and social benefits of participation in the farmer group for each member must outweigh the costs of that participation – without this there simply would be no participation, and “no participation” equates with “no sustainability”.

Individual farmers are facing a challenge of lack of farming inputs and equipment and this has an influence to the farmer groups. Many of the farmer groups are formed with an aim of accessing funds from outside, for instance from government departments or from the private sector (Mutimba, 2005:43). Mutimba (2005:43) emphasises on the other hand that farmers tend to form groups more to extract the material benefits usually associated with NGOs, and that such material resources then tend to create a dependency syndrome. Sustainability should be looked at in terms of behaviour patterns and norms rather than in structures (FAO, 1999:32). Farmer group members lack the skills on how to address the interests of their group members, and this creates problems for the farmer group as it leads to conflict between members. The low level of literacy makes it difficult to draft key rules and procedures (FAO, 1999:32). Many of the farmer groups draft rules that are not based on local values and social norms and this creates a problem for committed group

members. Lack of methods for reporting, accounting, monitoring and evaluation of farmer groups is a further major problem (FAO, 1999:37).

Extension workers are supposed to assemble all technical messages on various commodities and translate them for farmers to understand, and also to act as the farmers' mouthpiece in articulating problems to researchers (Mutimba, 1997:17). Often, however, the extension workers will disseminate information received from researchers to farmers without fully understanding what the results of this will be.

The expectations of efficient extension delivery require an extension worker to facilitate and initiate change by building a trusting relationship with a community to establish farmer participation (Henning & Hagmann, 2002:46). The facilitator encourages farmers to define their own problems and guides them in how to look for possible own solutions, and to learn more about change processes when forming or working as a group (Henning & Hagmann, 2002:46). According to National Agricultural Advisory Services (2003), the role of the extension worker is to train the farmer groups in the following areas: Leadership skills and group management. Organisation of meetings. Communication skills. Conflict management. Participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation.

The ability of the organisation to express predetermined needs to external decision-making bodies has to do with negotiation skills and capacity. Strong member support in the farmer group increases its capacity to reject paternalistic interventions, act for its own development and assert itself when in dialogue with development partners. This kind of support enables the farmer group to reject projects that do not fit the organisation's overall objectives (Mutunga, 2008:5).

Mutimba (2005:39) finds that many smallholder farmer groups in sub-Saharan African countries are not well organised. They lack the necessary resources, technical and management expertise, legal mandate and political power to express their demands for appropriate technologies and effective extension agencies. Because the farmers are not organised, there are no mechanisms for accountability through which they can ensure that agencies respond to their priority needs (Mutimba, 2005:39). The challenges faced by the smallholder farmers are huge if they are to enter the cash economy.

1.5 PROJECT RATIONALE

The number of extension workers has always been relatively small in relation to the size of the farming population to be served, especially when the advisory methods have had to rely almost entirely on interpersonal communication and demonstrations being brought to the villages. The formation and management of effective farmer groups can enhance the achievement of this mission. The aim of the study is to provide information that can be used by the Department of Agriculture in establishing guidelines that might be followed by farmers and extension workers to form effective farmer groups as a vehicle to develop agriculture in rural areas.

Non-governmental organisations play an important role in community development through training and the bringing of resources to the people of Limpopo. The findings of the study can also contribute to such organisations in identifying socio-economic factors that are important for agricultural development in the province. The study lays a foundation for further studies on the same subject in different areas of the province.

1.6 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to determine the effectiveness of farmer groups in the Sekhukhune district of the Makhuduthamaga local municipality as an extension approach in agricultural development.

The objectives of the study are to:

- Determine the efficacy of farmer groups in Makhuduthamaga municipality;
- Identify the critical internal and external group dynamics factors that influence group efficacy;
- Ascertain the role of the extension worker in group formation and
- Functioning in Makhuduthamaga local municipality.

1.7 HYPOTHESES

Against a theoretical background and assumption that internal and external group dynamic factors influence group functioning; the following hypotheses are set for the study:

H1. An effective successful extension service is a prerequisite for effective farmer group.

H2. Internal and external group dynamics factors influence the efficacy of group functioning

H3. Effective extension support is necessary for proper group formation and functioning.

CHAPTER 2

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A key and indispensable factor in the protection and enhancement of the smallholder agricultural sector is the existence of strong farmer organisations and that are able, motivated and sufficiently independent to effectively represent their interests (Mutimba, 2005:38). Such organisations must also take part in the implementation of the needed measures and control of resources at local level for effectiveness and sustainability.

The formation of farmer groups is influenced by key parameters such as social environment, purpose and potential benefit of farmer group formation, motivation and timing, role of a group promoter and form of external support (FAO, 1999:7). Field research findings show that such informal small group cooperation often serves as an important “schoolroom” where small farmers can acquire collective decision-making and problem-solving skills prior to joining more formal organisations such as cooperatives and other types of farmer organisations (FAO, 1999:1).

The formation of farmer groups should be based on an analysis of the local situation, ensuring that the structure fits into the local socio-economic environment. Members do not live in isolation and building on traditional group-level practices could be very advantageous (FAO, 1999:8). Understanding the kind of social capital that exists in that

area and its social parameters is very important and essential in any farmer group development activity (FAO, 1999:8).

Groups emerged and evolved when people had common problems and united to search for solutions (FAO, 1999:10). The FAO (1999:10) emphasises that experience has indicated that long-term sustainability of farmer groups depends on the initiation and financing from inside, with facilitators providing guidance. Participation implies active involvement in the development of rural people, as mentioned above, and particularly the development of the disadvantaged groups that form the mass of the population.

2.2 FARMER GROUPS

Farmer group is an informal, voluntary and self-governing association of small number of farmers whose aim is to improve the socio-economic conditions of its affiliated individual members. Typically, a farmer group may involve 5-15 members and may be part of a small farmer group association consisting of a few farmer groups serving 25 – 150 individual members, with a geographic scope varying from one village to a cluster of villages. Stevens and Terblanche (2004:41) define a mature group as “a self-directed, self-controlled body in which every member carries his part of the responsibilities for developing and executing the group’s plans”.

Farmer groups deliver innovative, consistent, cost-effective solutions and services to their members and communities. The formation and development of an effective farmer group is influenced by the skills of the group promoter and the adherence to certain basic group

dynamic principles. Most group promoters do not receive training, partly because properly trained trainers are very rare, especially those with experience in farmer group formation.

A group promoter is a facilitator who assists the group development process, acts as an intermediary between the farmer group and service providers and works with farmers to identify their problems and prioritise them (FAO, 1999:2). The new role of the promoter is to create more awareness in the group on group dynamics and decision making (Ewang, 1999:192). The role of the promoter is to facilitate change amongst farmer groups and to develop leadership. The promoter will assist group members to become aware that it is their responsibility to look for change and should facilitate the process of getting group members to analyse their situation critically; each member of the group needs to take a look at him/herself (Henning & Hagmann, 2002:67). The promoter should facilitate group members in identifying their strengths and weakness as well as behavioural patterns.

Training of group promoters should emphasise participatory approaches and aim at overcoming the tendency to use heavy-handed, direct approaches that in all likelihood will result in the failure of the farmer group. The main objective of the farmer group is to provide top quality solutions, systems and services to their fellow farmers and communities.

2.3 DEVELOPMENT OF FARMER GROUPS

According to Stevens and Terblanche (2005:6) a farmer group that can clearly illustrate a shared vision, goals, objectives and motivation in order to provide a focal point for group activities has the potential to develop and become effective. Therefore a farmer group should develop a vision to enable members to operate with a purpose. A vision should describe a realistic, credible and attractive future and the right vision is an impetus for committed, motivated and energised people (Stevens & Terblanche, 2005:7). A good vision clarifies purpose and direction, sets standards of excellence and reflects the uniqueness of the farmer group. Active participation between members to develop a vision and values in relation to their goals will enhance group development (Stevens & Terblanche, 2005:7).

The development of the mission statement has an influence on the effectiveness of the farmer group, and the group that cannot develop its own, understandable mission is likely to operate inefficiently (Stevens & Terblanche, 2005:7). The mission of a farmer group must be able to answer questions like: What functions does the farmer group perform? Why are these functions performed? Who will benefit from these actions? The extension worker should be able to play an active role in this process of setting goals and objectives for the group. Clear objectives for the group specify what has to be done and help to direct and represent motivational forces. Objectives allow members to evaluate once they have achieved a success (Stevens & Terblanche, 2005:8). Farmers usually become more committed when they produce better results.

A strong internal management structure is one of the cornerstones needed for the development of fully self-supporting farmer organisations (Mutunga, 2008:3). Internal factors that influence the effectiveness of farmer group include: a participative decision-

making process, management style, sense of commitment, strengthening and accountability, financial transparency and monitoring and leadership (Mutunga, 2008:9). The consultation of all members and sharing of responsibilities to encourage participation of members leads to better group decision making.

An effective group management style involves the sharing of responsibilities in a constructive way by selecting competent group members, delegating responsibilities and interacting with other organisations locally and at a national level (Mutunga, 2008:4). Management should be able to see the importance of thinking and planning ahead and deciding on and sticking to specific strategies. Managers should be competent, setting high standards for the group members. A successful farmer group is able to create and develop effective team work amongst members, whose morale will be high and who will be committed to their responsibilities (Mutunga, 2008:4). They will work with dedication to achieve the group objectives. Members should feel their work to be of value and should have the technical means to achieve organisation objectives (Mutunga, 2008:4). Leadership should establish and maintain clear lines of responsibility within the organisation and avoid divided duties and tasks by ensuring that chains of commands are as short as possible (Mutunga, 2008:4).

Bottom-up and top-down extension approaches all influence the development of the farmer group. According to (Mutunga, 2008:5) strong leadership helps to inject creative dynamics and motivation in the organization. An effective leader is one who shares in innovation, project development and decision making functions with other staff (Mutunga, 2008:5). . Farmer groups should be able to mobilise their own financial resources through

subscriptions, savings and financial resources in order to achieve self-supporting structures. Efficient management of funds to avoid their misuse is fundamental in sustaining farmer groups from grassroots level to national level (Mutunga, 2008:4).

Strong elected leadership will help to inject creative dynamics and motivation in the farmer group. An effective leader is the one who shares his vision and plans with committee members (Stevens & Terblanche, 2004:44). This enables the farmer group to survive changes better and to maintain high morale amongst the members; an effective leader also consolidates continuity of activity. Internal structures, systems and procedures may however constrain the performance of the group (Stevens & Terblanche, 2004:44): the structure of the group is one of the internal factors that may influence its effectiveness, as it may include different individual roles, techniques, networks and the dynamic processes that exist (Stevens & Terblanche, 2004:44).

There are five classical stages of group development (Stevens & Terblanche, 2005:2):

1. The forming stage

When the group is forming, members go through an orientation phase which involves amongst others purpose of the farmer group formation, structure and leadership of the farmer groups. The orientation phase also addresses issues on best strategies to handle possible tension that may arise within and between the farmer groups, as well as future unforeseen circumstances that may befall the farmer groups. Since most of the individual members of the farmer groups often than none know little or nothing about their responsibilities in the group, coupled with the absence of specific norms relating to

behaviour, the orientation phase affords the individual members of the group to start to learn about each other's background, shared values and thus develop the needed trust that characterize an effective farmer group.

2. The storming stage

Storming is characterised by conflict within group, as members struggle to define their objectives and goals. While some questions were addressed during the first stage, the roles of leadership, individuals, and group norms are still a challenge. The election of leaders is a critical point which causes members to fight against each other: members are also fighting for roles and status within the group. Individual members acquire self-confidence, and interpersonal and leadership skills are revealed.

3. The norming stage

During the third phase conflict is replaced with cohesiveness – a feeling of group unity. The members have a sense of group identity and mutual support, and cooperation between members of each farmer group increases and decisions are taken. The group cohesiveness reflects the development of group norms.

4. The performing stage

Performing manifests in fully functioning and accepting the group. This is where the individual member regards other members as sources of information and advice. This stage is where the group focuses on its purpose of establishment and members are able to attend to their problems.

5. The adjourning stage

This is the completion of the development process, in which finalisation of specific tasks and a changing of relationships is anticipated. This stage should be planned with farmer groups; their anticipated goals have been achieved and the farmer group can now revisit their plan and plan for another activity starting with goals and objectives.

Not all groups follow the development stages in a step by step fashion: some groups skip certain stages; but the five mentioned stages are usually followed in order for a group to be effective as there is no “shortcut” to development (Henning & Hagmann, 2002:56; Stevens & Terblanche, 2006)

2.4 BENEFITS OF FARMER GROUPS

The benefits of farmer groups in regard to the production of food are important since the motivation for participating in agriculture is first and foremost to contribute to household food security (Madukwe, 2004:1). The members of the farmer group benefit from support to each other, with experienced farmers becoming discussion partners for those less experienced and: members learn from each other (Madukwe, 2004:1). Farmer groups, whether at grassroots, district or national level have the major function of representing the interests and collective views of their members to government (Mutunga, 2008:10). According to Madukwe (2004:1) the benefits of farmer groups include making agricultural extension services more client-driven and efficient and strengthening farmers’ bargaining power with traders.

2.4.1 Benefits to farmers

By working in small groups, farmers can reduce the costs of accessing inputs, production technologies, information and markets by sharing these costs amongst all members of the group: (ACC Network on Rural Development and Food Security, 2000:1). Lower input costs: by purchasing in bulk through the group, farmers obtain bulk sale discounts from suppliers and can share transport costs. Lower information costs: through the group, farmers can link up with government extension services by sharing costs in accessing these services (for example travel costs to the nearest extension worker, buying a transistor radio, etc.). Lower costs of financial services: through the group, farmers can open group savings and/or credit accounts offered by financial institutions at reduced individual expense. Reduced marketing and selling costs: through the group, farmers can share storage, processing, transport and selling costs. Lower costs per farmer mean higher profits. Help individuals with decision making: when the group takes a decision, chances are good that the decision will be a better one than a decision taken by an individual. Group work can stimulate new ideas: members get ideas they did not have before. This can lead to several other benefits for farmers, e.g. higher levels of production, increased levels of satisfaction with group membership, and so forth. Going against conventional wisdom: the group acts as a security for individuals (ACC Network on Rural Development and Food Security, 2000:1).

2.4.2 Benefits to government

The Department of Agriculture obtains several advantages by working through farmer groups to disseminate information and build capacity (ACC Network on Rural Development and Food Security, 2000:1): Working with groups can be more cost-effective than working with individuals. Small scale farmer access to financial services can be increased; through farmer group approaches, governments and banking institutions reach more farmers at little increase in cost. More efficient delivery of farm inputs and marketing of output: through group approaches efficiency in the delivery of inputs and marketing of output are improved. This translates into lower consumer prices (ACC Network on Rural Development and Food Security, 2000:1).

2.4.3 Group formation at local level

Ideally, group formation should be done by farmers themselves (ACC Network on Rural Development and Food Security, 2000:2). This process can be facilitated by locally identified and specially trained group promoters (GPs), who assist the group development process and act as intermediaries between the groups and outside service providers (FAO, 1999:18). Some basic rules of group formation are:

1. Encourage group action

Do not impose anything; groups should be based on farmer needs - not those of outsiders.

Work with farmers to identify the problems and prioritise them.

Help farmers assess their group self-help capacities, their strengths and resources for solving those problems.

Assist in identifying areas for group action only where the benefits outweigh the costs.

Group formation. Go slowly: forming healthy groups takes time. Work to gain the people's confidence and trust. Listen and show them respect.

Call village meetings. Discuss food security issues and identify how a group approach might be used to help solve those problems.

Discuss goals and expectations. Remind people that the advantages of group action are realised through hard work, self-sacrifice and clear focus on realistic group objectives.

Focus on individual profitability. Group action must make economic sense to each farmer. Individual incomes earned through the group should exceed expenses.

Assess all the benefits and costs of cooperation. Ask the people what they will gain from participation and what will be the cost in terms of self-sacrifice. Do the benefits outweigh the costs?

- Establish groups (FAO, 1999:17). Encourage the formation of small groups (5 -10 members). The smaller the number of members the better, so that everyone understands the process, becomes really involved in it and then “owns” it (FAO, 1999:17). Farmers learn more quickly in small groups than in large ones. There is more trust and information is shared more freely.

- Ensure that group members share a common, homogeneous (member should have similar interests and background) bond. A common bond means fewer disputes and more efficient learning.
- Promote groups that are voluntary and democratic. Members should decide through majority vote or consensus who joins the group, who will lead them, what rules to follow, and what activities they will undertake.
- Help the group choose a name for itself. Names are important. They help build a group's identity and promote member solidarity.
- Assist the group in setting realistic objectives. Group members must reach consensus on what will be done, by whom and when.
- Urge groups to meet regularly. Frequent meetings are desirable during the early learning stage. Stress the need for regular attendance.

Aim at group self-reliance

- For the benefits of group action to continue even after outside assistance ceases, the group must become self-reliant and cohesive units. These require training.
- Ensure that leadership develops and is shared. A group should not depend too much on a single individual.
- Highlight the importance of member contributions. Regular group savings are essential and should be encouraged. Member contributions to group activities help build a sense of group ownership and solidarity.

- Encourage simple record keeping. Records help the group remember what has been decided at meetings and keep track of contributions, income and expenses. They are essential for monitoring group business activities.

5. Economic reasons

- The farmer group has to take the initiative to alleviate the problem of poor distribution of inputs and lack of buyers for their produce.
- The cost of delivering services and information to farmers is lower through farmer groups.
- Farmer groups develop a sense of responsibility and confidence that enables them to demand services for their felt needs and to identify those more likely to be successful economically.

2.5 INTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE FARMER GROUP

Group dynamics is the area of social psychology that focuses on advancing knowledge about the nature of group life (FAO,1990:2). Each individual brings certain characteristics which are peculiarly his own to the group. These include his abilities, desires, wishes as well as blocks and frustrations. These are called “forces” which contribute to the dynamics of the group. In addition to these, other forces seem to develop as a result of interaction between individuals – a property of the group as a whole (FAO,1990:2).

The extension worker is primarily concerned with behavioural change in any agricultural development activities. Behavioural change may manifest in an individual, the group and/or the community. Behavioural change of the group as a whole is more important for

extension workers than behavioural change in individuals through groups. Behavioural change is achieved through group discussion and shared decision making.

(Novafrica, 2007:15) indicated that there are internal factors that influence the effectiveness of farmer groups include the following:

- incentive and rewards systems;
- the organisational 'climate' or 'culture';
- the history and traditions of the organisation;
- leadership and management style;

clarity and acceptance of the organisation's mission;

extent of shared norms and values promoting teamwork and pursuit of organisational goals;

organisational structure.

Other factors that affect the farmer groups include:

■ Size of the farmer group

The size of the group plays an important role, particularly as the discussion is generally less strained in small groups. Training is more effective when participants are given attention and it is therefore advisable to have a small group, as a well-trained group leads to a successful and effective farmer group. The members of a small group are more likely to trust each other and accept joint responsibility for any actions the group takes.

Individuals are able to perceive personal self-interest served within the collective group interest and this is easier to develop in smaller groups (Stevens & Terblanche, 2004:46).

The smaller the number of members the better, so that everyone can understand the process, become really involved in it and then “own” it (FAO, 1999:17). Small farmer groups are also seen a useful organisational mechanism for mobilising small farmer collective self-help actions aimed at improving their own economic and social situations and that of their communities. People tend to learn more quickly in small group situations; there is more face-to-face contact and therefore less room for misunderstanding. The small group should have a membership averaging between 5-15 members; the group operates on an informal basis, i.e. they operate without need of legal recognition (FAO, 1999:2). According to McCarthy *et al.* (2002:2), the size of the group should be small so as to decrease transaction and communication costs and because small is generally associated with homogeneous groups.

Stevens and Terblanche (2005:8) emphasise that the size of a group is related to its effectiveness, with smaller groups being more effective. Relatively more effective groups were found in general to be fairly small (seven members), democratic and reasonably homogenous in terms of farming systems (Stevens & Terblanche, 2005:8).

■ Membership of farmer group

Traditions and past experience of working together influences the way in which farmer groups might be established, as well as the extent to which the group becomes an effective and viable farmer group. When groups are established, the members might have

to deal with people they hardly know, and unfamiliarity may leave them feeling uncomfortable and constrained (Goodman & Marx, 1978:193). The conditions and the meaning of membership, as well as the expectations and level of accountability of members, influence the effectiveness of the farmer group. Bembridge (1993:98) mentions that the key to successful group formation is for group members to have similar interests.

If membership is homogeneous, i.e. the group members share common interests or bonds and come from the same socio-economic level or neighborhood, the group is more likely to be successful. Once the rankings are assigned, they have a clear influence on interactions amongst members. Those with low status tend to show differential behaviours, waiting for cues from others, raising their hands before speaking, assenting to others' opinions, carrying out others' directives (Goodman & Marx, 1978:200).

Farmer groups should agree on whether membership will be open or closed (Grusenmeyer, 2004:2). New members should be able to attend meetings at any time and participate fully in farmer group activities (Grusenmeyer, 2004:2). New members bring new ideas and new perspectives that will enrich the discussions and all members have the opportunity to learn from the broader group of people. According to Grusenmeyer (2004:2) farmer groups may choose to be open for the first few meetings while goals and objectives are determined and stable membership is established. Open farmer groups may require a more formal structure and an increase in size will change group dynamics and may make the group less cohesive.

Non-members do not generally attend the meetings of the farmer groups, and once members have decided on the goals and objectives, they tend to remain stable over time

(Grusenmeyer, 2004:2). The farmer group members who operate continuously in a group will develop strong relationships which will lead to more open discussion and sharing of more sensitive information (Grusenmeyer, 2004:2). On the negative side a closed membership limits the number of ideas and the group may become stale over time.

■ Vision and goals of the farmer group

Vision is a central concept in the life of an individual, as it gives direction, a sense of purpose and focus on the future rather than condemning the past (Solomon, 2004:32). The vision can involve working in a group, helping others, and inspiring others (Solomon, 2004:32). A visionary leader has a dream, a focus on change to enable him to achieve his goal. Solomon (2004:32) indicates that people who have developed a vision have become open-minded.

The group should identify and analyse important needs in the light of changing conditions; if they fail in this it becomes a challenge. Groups often fail because they fail to choose the things that are pertinent in terms of their needs and interests, failing also to state clearly the realistic objectives that will help meet the needs. Group goals can have a long-term or short-term character (Goodman & Marx, 1978:206). Short-term goals are important, because their achievement gives groups stepping stones to the long-term ones. It is through goals that efforts of group members are coordinated. Goodman & Marx, (1978:206) mentioned that group goals provide a major basis for common interests, for developing a feeling of identity and for setting group standards. It is through group goals that the groups' ends are defined.

■ Cohesiveness

According to (Goodman & Marx, 1978:205), the level of cohesion of a group shows how strongly the group is bonded together. It shows how much of a “we” feeling the group has (Goodman & Marx, 1978:207). Normally higher levels of cohesion go hand in glove with better group functioning. Smaller groups have more opportunity to stimulate and make use of higher levels of group cohesion to reach their own and the group’s goals. Group cohesion will change when new members are attracted to the group; the degree of cohesion may fluctuate and each member’s attraction to the group will vary at different times (Goodman & Marx, 1978:213)

In many rural groups one finds that a specific individual or a few members of certain communities dominate a group (Bingen, 2008:2). These individuals are often from the elite and frequently have inherited their power, although some non-elites may acquire power through wealth or other means (Bingen, 2008:2). Any member with a dominating personality has the potential to distract other members. The dominating members often divert the whole group from its goals and fancies. Extension workers usually find it difficult to work with such people and groups (Bingen, 2008:4).

A farmer group as a whole should never forget that it belongs to its members and is accountable to them (Bingen, 2008:4). The individual members of the affiliated farmer group will be all the more inclined to exercise controls when they have a financial stake in the success of the higher-level unit and have something at risk if it fails; in other words, they feel that they are the owners (ACC Network on Rural Development and Food Security, 2000:13). The culture of people who cannot read and write often leads them to

express their rules in poems and songs that are performed at the start and during meetings: this also helps illiterate members to remember the rules and pictures and diagrams will also contribute to members to remember the rules. .

Leadership: The farmer group needs to be voluntary, democratic, self-motivated, trustworthy and opportunity-conscious (Jost *et al.*, 1997:8). Tu Haong and Graham (2006:7) indicate that individual's acceptance of group's nomination acts as a glue to pull people together and make them go in the same direction - conflicts of interest are less likely to occur. The election of leaders by farmer group members seems straightforward, but the fact is that group members might not personally know the capabilities of the members and this might affect the farmer groups. A participatory mode of operation is needed and such a mode plays a major role between members both before and after group formation. Jost *et al.* (1997:13) mention that members need to have common interests that translate into clearly focused objectives. The group should have operational rules, responsibilities should be assigned within the group and members should all be involved in decision making.

Different leadership styles are applied for different group activities; the autocratic, democratic and laissez faire styles are examples of these (Jost *et al.*, 1997:4) An autocratic leadership style is where leaders dominate the rest of group members by making the decisions and ensuring their execution (Jost *et al.*, 1997:8). The democratic leadership style is a very open and collegial style of running a team. Ideas move freely amongst the group and are discussed openly (Jost *et al.*, 1997:8)..

In these fast moving organisations, every option for improvement has to be considered to keep the group from falling out of date (Tu hoang and Graham, 2006:8). The democratic leadership style means facilitating the conversation, encouraging people to share their ideas, and then synthesising all the available information into the best possible decision. The democratic leader must also be able to communicate that decision back to the group. The characteristics of the laissez faire style include: Allows members of a group to have complete freedom to make decisions concerning the completion of their work or ask questions of the leader; The leader provides the group members with the materials they need to accomplish their goals and answers questions to the member's questions.

Each leadership style has its own advantages and disadvantages which affect the effectiveness of farmer groups.

At farmer group level, shared leadership systems with leadership changing hands regularly and fairly rapidly provide an opportunity for each member to “learn the ropes” and thus be in a better position to exercise control over the farmer group. . It is advantageous to the group if the elected leaders are motivated by a sense of service to the community, rather than by personal gain. It is important is to take into consideration the level of maturity of the group, as it guides the time when a group member can be allowed to follow delegation of leadership responsibilities and a shared leadership.

A shared leadership system is practiced by most farmer groups, even though it may lead to discontinuity in farmer group management (FAO, 1999:14). Shared leadership is a good way to give members a chance to demonstrate and acquire leadership skills (FAO,

1999:15). Successful groups need well capacitated members with confidence and ownership spirit (Bingen, 2008:5).

The visionary leader is able to come up with or develop the mechanisms needed to address challenges successfully (Stevens and Terblanche, 2004,47). A well-planned strategy will enable a leader to assess the current situation and challenges faced, and to outline strategies and quantifiable objectives (Department of Agriculture, Limpopo Province, 2006:4). The strategist uses behaviour and dispute-settling strategies that are fully understood and known by the group members to address their challenges.

■ Social factors

The family plays a central role in social life, and family ties are considered to be the primary and most important layer of social networks (Hoang, Castella & Novosad, 2006:518). This influences to the effectiveness of the farmer group (Hoang, Castella & Novosad, 2006:518). Kinship networks are particularly important for gaining access to information, and most of the people have an opportunity to discuss topics with relatives afterwards. Kinship networks serve as one of the channels of communication in the community and are an important source of information for large numbers of local people, given their limited access to mass media and lack of direct contact with local government and other institutions (Hoang, Castella & Novosad, 2006:519).

The local socio-cultural norms and conditions have a direct influence on any proposal for farmer group formation and the functioning of it (Hoang, Castella & Novosad, 2006:522). An analysis of the local situation is important to ensure that the group fits into the local

socio-economic environment (Hoang, Castella & Novosad, 2006:522). Building on a traditional group-help structure could be very effective where the society is homogenous, but less so when a farmer group formation would cut across traditional groupings (Hoang, Castella & Novosad, 2006:515). The kind of social capital that exists in an area, as well as its social parameters (ethnicity, religion, caste, education, etc.) is important, and essential in any group promotion activity. In most cases where traditional organisations exist, the formation of farmer groups are only justifiable if they complement existing organisations.

The main socio-cultural obstacles to a successful farmer group usually come from the privileged and powerful who may see the new institution as a threat, especially when its aim is to strengthen the negotiation position of the poor (Hoang, Castella & Novosad, 2006:516). Even a traditional institution could pose a problem (Hoang, Castella & Novosad, 2006:517). Co-existence of traditional institutions can be an obstacle, especially when the farmer group cuts across traditional groupings (Hoang, Castella & Novosad, 2006:518).

Cultural factors are likely affect the participation of women in farmer groups. Men own many assets such as land and animals, while women do not (Davis & Negah, 2007:20). Women often take care of the people and animals around the households, and the core business of caring for goats, for instance, often falls on them even if it is their husbands who are in the group (Davis & Negah, 2007:24). With regard to leadership, it is apparently that more men are chairpersons (Davis & Negah, 2007:24). This is possibly due to traditional roles, where men are seen to be more strongly able to represent the group before the Chief and government offices (Davis & Negah, 2007:25).

With regard to wealth, many of the community self-help groups are formed by the resource-poor, to bring about some benefit (Bingen, 2008:2). They naturally come together because they have needs, and they are categorised as having small farms and few or no cattle (Bingen, 2008:2). Many of the treasurers are selected from a higher category in terms of wealth, the point being that if the treasurer misuses money, the group members will have a better chance of getting their money back.

2.6. EXTERNAL FACTORS INFLUENCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE FARMER GROUP

2.6.1 Land availability

The majority of previously disadvantaged people in rural areas have been staying on property without the legal right to live on that land. The government has introduced the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development programme (LRAD) (Limpopo Department of Agriculture, 2004: 23). LRAD is the government programme to help previously disadvantaged people, including black, coloured and Indian people, to become effective farmers on their own land. (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:6)

The LRAD programme consists of various acts that govern the legalising of occupiers regarding the right to live on land, so that they no longer have to live in fear of losing their homes without reason. For example, the Extension of Security of Tenure Act, 62 of 1997 (Department of Land Affairs, 1997) has been implemented to protect people who live in rural or peri-urban land with the permission of the owner in charge of that land. The act gives occupiers a secure legal right to live on and use the land.

The formulation of acts and policies will assist vulnerable people to have and own land legally. For example, the Communal Land Rights Act 11 of 2004 (Department of Land Affairs, 2004) provides for legal security of tenure by transferring communal land to communities, or by awarding comparable redress. The Land Titles Adjustment Act 111 of 1993 (Department of Land Affairs, 1993) regulates the allocation of certain land claims in regard to ownership, but where occupiers do not have registered title deeds in respect thereof (Department of Land Affairs, 1993).

The availability of land for agricultural purposes allows farmer group members to expand their farming practice on a commercial scale. Members of such groups tend to operate largely on a commercial scale, which involves production and marketing of single, cash crops and exporting these as the predominant source of farm income (Bingen, 2008:1).

The lack of available land for agricultural purposes could lead to a mixed farming groups (Bingen, 2008:2). According to Bingen (2008:2) different types of farmer groups tend to be built around the protection of members' interests. Also, most subsistence farmers have smaller and more marginalised land (Bingen, 2008:2). The members tend to run small-scale farming operations and other diverse production enterprises that are less highly capitalised. In addition, members of this type of farmer group rely less heavily upon marketing of single commodities. Land in rural communities is poorly managed because it is managed by the tribal authority and there are no measures taken to conserve available soil. This also influences the effectiveness of the farmer group negatively as they are unable to make loans by means of using a piece of land as collateral because of the unavailability of land tenure right.

2.6.2 Policies

A number of acts and policies govern the different types of farming activities that influence the effective or ineffective development of farmer groups (Bingen, 2008:3). The farmer group members are governed by those acts and policies, and depending on the tax rates and tariffs, their benefits vary from one season to another(Bingen, 2008:3). It is hoped that the introduction of new strategies such as introducing product-based approaches, will enhance value-added agro-industrial development, strengthen intra-sectoral linkages, and improve the development of agricultural industries based on market signals and consumer preferences (Bingen, 2008:3).

Studies have revealed that a number of policies and institutions that support strong farmer organisation-research-extension linkages for technology development and dissemination have shown some improvement in the livelihoods of rural people (Bingen, 2008:3). Fostering strong relationships between agricultural research institutions, extension bodies and farmers' groups seems to be an important means by which appropriate and participatory technology development can bring changes in disengagement of the state, economic liberalisation and decentralization (Bingen, 2008:4). At the same time, in many contexts, farmers' groups are gaining more autonomy and increasing their economic and technical capacities (Livelihoods Connect, 2000). Institutions have policies that promote farmer groups with more success in expressing and satisfying their needs in the area of technology generation and dissemination through access to diverse sources of funding. A farmer group gains the power to demand specific services suited to their member's needs,

by facilitating access to resources that enable them to commission and finance agricultural research and extension (Bingen, 2008:4).

Technology policies which deal primarily with the development and use of biological, chemical and mechanical technology usually assist and guide the farmers to be cautious and to apply them according to directives. Farmer groups could understand the policies through sharing and exposure to other farmer groups (Bingen, 2008:5).

2.6.3 Government structures and the development of more pluralistic extension

Government structures have an influence on farmer groups, because of decentralisation of government programmes, they offer farmer groups opportunities to access government services locally and to influence policies. This eventually promotes sustainability and visibility of farming activity and therefore also of the organisation. Limiting the role of the central extension organisation to these policy functions resolves many issues related to the inability of central administration to tailor programmes and delivery methods to meet the diverse needs of farmers and rural people in different areas of the country, a capacity that is essential for successful programme implementation (Swanson, 2008:27). The decentralisation of programmes might be responsive to the demands of farmer groups. Government policies and efforts at restructuring the public sector includes downsizing and right-sizing in terms of fiscal prudence, enhancing productivity, efficiency, and implementation capabilities of public sector institutions, which brings some changes into the operations of farmer group.

A number of different extension models and approaches have been promoted by different institutions with different levels of results and impact. Swanson (2008:17) indicates that in most developing countries which have achieved independence, most extension systems were units within ministries of agriculture, and these agencies were top down, multifunctional systems that had limited resources, with little attention given to the needs of resource-poor farmers. The focus was on better-resourced farmers, because they were the “innovators” and “early adopters” of new technologies (Swanson, 2008:17).

Swanson (2008:17) explains that this traditional, top-down T&V extension model proved to be unsustainable after donor financing ended and as a result, other extension approaches have been tried and tested during the past decades. These include participatory approaches to agricultural extension, which engage local farmers in setting extension programme priorities and refocusing extension activities on the needs of these farmers. However, these approaches did not address the structural problem of the top-down extension system.

The farming research and extension approach was initiated to examine the current farming systems and to seek ways of increasing the productivity of integrated production systems. A primary problem faced by this approach is that these efforts were marginally financed because they were not perceived to be the core functions of either agricultural research or extension (Swanson, 2008:17). A related issue is that FSR programmes were largely focused on achieving national food security, rather than introducing more high-value products that could improve rural livelihoods and help poor farm households achieve food security.

Other rural development models emerged, including integrated rural development (IRD) programmes that expanded the focus of extension beyond merely increasing agricultural productivity to improve rural livelihoods. However, given the lack of well-trained extension workers at field level, most such programmes had poorly prepared and poorly defined agenda of organising and delivering educational programmes to all types of rural people.

The current resource base amongst public extension workers, including the current number of staff and their level of training, is still a problem which affects the formation of farmer groups and their effectiveness. The typical extension worker does not have sufficient operational funds, especially at field level, to cover routine travel, communications and training costs; therefore, many routine extension activities are poorly executed. Many public extension workers only carry out routine extension assignments, as defined by senior-level managers, not by the farmers being served.

2.6.4 Education

Literacy and numeracy skills are the backbone of viable farmer groups (Bingen, 2008:4). An inadequate level of education affects all aspects of group viability, including administrative procedures, financial management, and ability for political lobbying and bargaining. Formal agricultural education is not necessarily the answer for farmers due to the fact that the practicality and applicability of training may not apply to farmers' individual situations and local conditions. There may also be a lack of availability of appropriate information about the content of courses and teaching approaches applied (Bamberry, Dunn & Lamont, 1997:4). Bamberry, Dunn and Lamont (1997:3) claim, however, to have

measured improvement in productivity resulting from increased years of agricultural training

Financial management and record-keeping is often the weakest and most vulnerable link in otherwise successful farmer groups, and this may represent the biggest threat to viability in the long run. Successful financial management includes transparency and simplicity, as it encourages interest and commitment amongst individual members.

2.6.5 Formal market

There is growing recognition that markets, not technology, have become the primary driver for agricultural development in many countries; therefore, more attention is now given to the concept of agricultural innovation systems (Swanson, 2008: ix). Collective action is seen in many community-level efforts in agriculture and natural resource management, from technology dissemination, promotion and protection of resources rights, and accessing information of new technologies, credit and marketing. In its context of small-scale farmer groups, the direction of its actions generally emanate from the economic and social benefits that members of farmer groups can obtain from their investments. Farmers are persuaded to organise themselves into groups when there are opportunities to improve their farms and the economic welfare of their families. The formal market and/or organised market buys products following specific requirements like quality, quantity, continuous supply and also graded and well packed products in sizes. Successful marketing requires knowledge of demand, sufficient storage and transport facilities, and capital (ACC Network on Rural Development and Food Security, 2000:9). The formal market demands comprehensive management with better recording and use of advanced

technology so that they remain updated with new information. Rural farmer groups are faced with challenges due increasing of organised markets, value chain approaches and commodity intensification.

Studies reveal that organised village cooperatives are compelled to take loans from the banks and to rely on NGOs to assist them to monitor activities in order to enable them to pay back loans. Parastatals usually devolve many of the responsibilities particularly when the contract-farming system is applied. The farmer groups mostly lack clarity concerning ownership of land and equipment, land preparation and culture practices and poor management of working capital leads to mounting debt, while a mixture of varieties adversely affects the quality expected (Coulter, 2007: 17).

The niche market is about specialisation in certain products to satisfy a specific market segment and a relatively small group of between 15 to 70 members has demonstrated that this is the best in terms of technical competence as producer of quality products. The selection of the product needed in bulk by the market is the ideal, and income can be increased by applying technically sound processing techniques, including handling, storing and standardising the quality of marketable products. The message is that where small-scale farmers collectively lack financial capital, technical competence is its only capital and comparative advantage to break into market.

The formal market, on the other hand, has a positive influence on the farmer group and its members if a better approach is applied. Farmer groups should negotiate markets for specific crops that are in demand and easily produced in their area of operation in order to produce high quality produce. By improving their marketing arrangements, farmers will

obtain greater revenue for their outputs and improve access to inputs, thereby facilitating the process of intensification.

2.6.6 Globalisation

External factors stem from globalisation and liberalisation due to the agreements of the World Trade Organisation which create greater competition for the agricultural sector. Structural constraints do prevail: uneconomic smallholdings, lack of commercialisation of the small farm sector, slow factor productivity growth, monoculture and low private sector investment are all challenges faced by farmer groups.

Now, with the expanding demand for bio-fuels, especially from foreign countries, the demand for basic food crops is once again changing, which will further challenge the capacity of small-scale farmers, particularly those in rural areas, to improve their livelihoods and achieve household food security. The other major change is that the private sector is now playing an increasing role in most developing countries through the sale of proprietary technologies (e.g. genetic, biological, chemical information) in these rapidly growing markets. Farmer cooperatives are playing an increasingly important role in providing an integrated package of inputs, technical information and management services to farmers, especially to commercial farmers. In these cases, technical advice tends to be more-product driven rather than farmer-driven i.e. giving good technical advice that will maximise farm income.

2.7 THE ROLE OF FARMER GROUPS IN EXTENSION SERVICES

The small farmer group is defined as an informal voluntary self-help group composed of five to fifteen small farmers from the same village or community (ACC Network on Rural Development and Food Security, 2000), intent on undertaking mutually beneficial activities related to their economic and social well-being. The role of the farmer group is to help the members to improve productivity and reduce costs of cultivation through collective purchase of inputs and services (Sulaiman, 2003:5). Through holding of meetings and sharing of information, members will be successful and become more responsible. Sulaiman (2003:5) also mentions that farmer groups are formed to facilitate transfer of agricultural technology among farmers in the village.

The members of the farmer group are part of the society, and they are involved in community activities: as such they know each other, understand each other and respect each other. The farmer groups are able to promote new technology and participatory development approach skills. The farmer group does help farmers to access credit and strengthen their negotiating power through collective marketing. One outstanding feature of the farmer group is that it facilitates group savings in order to have the ability to finance certain joint ventures. In order to develop group members, the farmer group should use the group members' own resources optimally, which will lead to accountability and responsibility. It is also emphasised (Coulter, 2007: 17; Building Sustainable Farmer Organisation, 1996:11), that the leadership and the members of the farmer group must develop enough self-confidence and sufficient economic and political power to counteract any threat of domination from other organisations.

Membership participation is one of the major factors in the development and operation of sustainable farmer groups, which will give the group groups the opportunity to identify any gaps. One of the mechanisms through which members can participate in organisational decision making it enhances the farmer group. According to Jost *et al.* (1997:4), farmer groups can encourage and organise collective representation and action with external institutions to access the external resources to develop various farmer groups. Collective representation encourages system thinking and dialogue. Thus, farmer groups that have solutions to problems are likely to be viable and to have active members (Henning and Haggmann, 2002:35).

Cooperative learning about new ways of management can become a tool for farmer groups and individual member empowerment. Jost *et al.* (1997:5) also mention that outside institutions see greater benefits and efficiencies in collective representation activities with farmer groups, while at same time farmers can influence the activities of such institutions to some extent.

The farmer group can influence agricultural research through participation and the conducting of complementary on-farm and on-station research. These links at local level could shape institutional change and enable the obtaining of research institution programme funding by farmer groups. Operating in a cluster of farmer groups sharing the same interests, with each farmer bringing a different experience, makes the activities more viable.

The farmer group approach can play a valuable role in influencing government policies and also realising economies of scale. Through the farmer groups, individuals can benefit

from supporting each other in learning and adopting new technologies. Thus farmer-to-farmer extension is amplified (Madukwe, 2006:1). Communication is one of the extension tools and interactions between members of the group that helps the extension worker to spend less time with the group. According to Madukwe (2006:1) the role of the farmer group in extension services includes the following:

- It makes agricultural extension services more client-driven and efficient.
- Farmer groups are able to bargain with one voice with traders.
- Transaction costs for input supplies and output buyers are reduced.
- Public sector extension costs are reduced.

Henning and Hagmann (2002:29) mention that participatory extension approaches respond to key challenges faced in extension and service delivery. Farmers learn through self-reflection by drawing lessons from their experiences; local knowledge can be managed for sustainability. The farmer group committee can organise exposure visits to see other practices in similar activities. Farmer groups can link with other service providers and stakeholders to substitute what is lacking internally.

Where farmer groups are community based and apply local knowledge they can, together with support from government agencies, focus on sustainability issues at farm and catchment level. The most successful groups are those that take responsibility for planning, implementing and monitoring their own activities.

The farmer group that sees itself as a unit has more influence in extension service delivery. As Kitetu (2005:8) mentions, the farmer group that uses the inclusive “We” shows

cohesion of the group, and a relationship of trust and friendship. The psychological impact of “we” in the group is that it says “we belong together”. Farmer groups can successfully perform mutual social assistance activities and can easily link up with similar groups in the area, in order to achieve economies of scale and increase their market power.

The farmer group should plan and hold meetings regularly. At each meeting previous performance should be reviewed, and problems and needs prioritised with the participation of all members. The group should hold regular meetings where individual members give reports and allocate resources to each activity to fit with the current requirements. In the early stages, technical skills of farmers may be a challenge, but the group can organise various activities such field days, training, tours, sharing of experiences, and so forth (Tu Hoang & Graham, 2006:3). Through these activities it is very possible for the group members gain experience and gradually learn new technologies, until they meet the standard of the export market.

2.8 ROLES OF THE EXTENSION WORKER IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF FARMER GROUP

In economically advanced countries, the ratio of extension workers to farmers lies between 1:350 and 1:1000, whereas most developing countries are lucky if they have one to every 5000 farm families (Adams, 1990:2); and increases in the rural population soon swamp any improvements in services. A ratio of extension workers to individual farmers is, however, of little practical value if the extension message is inappropriate (Adams, 1990:2).

Many recommended practices have been insufficiently profitable to justify their inclusion in extension programmes, and without a good understanding of farm management, extension workers are unable to reassure farmers about the benefits of proposed changes. The emphasis on scientific leadership has implications for the curricula offered in agricultural training institutions, and often agricultural students are taught about crops and livestock but not about the people (farmers) who produce them (Mutimba, 1997:121). Lack of relevant skills on the part of extension workers has a negative impact on the effectiveness of the farmer group and its functioning although they are tasked with responsibilities in this regard.

Regular meetings with farmer groups scattered throughout their work areas are the best way to communicate with the groups. By having farmer groups scattered throughout the work area, extension workers can give regular intensive advice to a number of farmers at the same time and can also demonstrate new ideas and improved farming practices. The extension worker's objective in using farmer groups in agricultural extension work is to form a nucleus of interested farmers in an extension worker's work area from which adapted farming practices flow outwards to the rest of the area (Bembridge, 1993:97). The extension worker's role is to facilitate joint participation by members of the farmer group to solve problems.

Extension workers should create an enabling environment by mediating with other stakeholders like bank institutions and NGOs (FAO, 1999:18). Training, education and organisation are important factors, but communication development and information dissemination should not be overlooked. Managerial capacity among the rural poor will

usually be rare until the farmer group members have been trained (ACC Network on Rural Development and Food Security, 2000:12). The extension worker should capacitate farmer groups to enable them to acquire minimum skills in order to understand how their organisation works.

Rotating leadership systems, with leadership changing hands in regular and fairly rapid rotation, provide an opportunity for each member to “learn the ropes” and thus be in a better position to exercise control over the group (ACC Network on Rural Development and Food Security, 2000:14).

The extension worker’s role is to guide the leadership of the group through the processes of gaining insight, creativity and rational logical thinking, and identify alternative ways of achieving objectives. The extension worker should also clarify issues so that members understand that planning helps to ensure that the necessary resources like finance, personnel and time will be available when needed. The farmer group will be trained to understand that vision is an articulation of a destination towards which the organisation should aim. What should be envisioned is a future that is more desirable than the present, an inspirational and creative future state of success. Most extension workers are trained as crop and livestock specialists and have little training in the social sciences; therefore, most are not trained in how to organise farmers into producer groups and other types of farmer groups.

Self-development is very important for the extension worker; “you cannot change others if you cannot change yourself. Change, or change will manage you!” Extension workers must become aware of their strengths and weaknesses (ACC Network on Rural

Development and Food Security, 2000:21). Through self development extension workers will be ready to drive innovations and new ideas in farmer groups.

The farmer group will be trained on how to draw up objectives for their organization. This entails the systematic gathering of information regarding factors which may influence the attainment of the end goal. The extension worker will show the group different means of gathering information like questionnaires, inspections, research, interviews and brain storming with other community members. Successful extension programmes promote strong partnerships between farmers and extension workers. The extension worker creates awareness in the farmer group about new technologies and markets and also introduces new products suitable for urban markets.

The majority of the economic growth occurs in urban areas, creating an increasing demand for fruit, vegetables and livestock. This growing demand for high-value products offers an important market and employment opportunities for rural and farm households. However, if small-scale farmers, through farmer groups, are to produce these new high-value products, they must first learn about new production and marketing systems to determine whether they can successfully pursue these new agribusinesses.

Given these emerging changes in both the national and worldwide agricultural economies, all types of farmers, but especially small-scale, subsistence farmers, will need additional new skills and knowledge to successfully produce and market potential new high-value products.

The role of an extension worker is to capacitate and strengthen farmer groups for self-reliance and ownership of their activities. The leadership should be trained on their role and on how to allocate the responsibilities to the individual members in order to achieve their goals. The extension worker should become a catalyst, mobilising farmer group members to experiment, to identify needs and to find solutions. He must be a facilitator rather than a teacher, and must manage change in the communities and their institutions. They will be guided on how to reflect on every step they take in carrying out an experiment, and also in how to link with external service providers for better results, and for their benefit.

The extension worker has to ensure that farmer groups develop an ability to create strong linkages with external stakeholders for them to succeed. Marketing is one of the external challenging factors; an extension worker has to create awareness in terms of linkages to specific market opportunities, whereas producers are being equipped to respond to particular market demands (Madukwe, 2006:3). The extension worker will guide the farmer on how to network with researchers, other extension workers and service providers.

McCalman *et al.* (2002: 1) also mentions that the extension worker's role is to ensure feedback to researchers and to improve the two-way flow of information between producers and researchers. In terms of research, the extension worker ensures that farmers are continually being developed and that they work together on research proposals to incorporate farmer's ideas. According to Farrington (1994:1) the role of the extension worker in using conventional extension approaches is diagnosis of farmers' socio-economic and agro-ecological conditions and their opportunities and constraints,

message transfer through direct contact between extension worker and farmer groups and development of linkages with researchers, NGOs, farmer groups, banks and private commercial sector.

According to Henning and Hagmann (2002:67) the role of extension worker in using participatory extension approaches is facilitation: to motivate the group members to make farmer group members analyse their situation critically, facilitate for self discovery, facilitate to discover and create norms and values, facilitate to support and managing change, facilitate to establish a culture of feedback and reflection and facilitate to see the facts instead of politics.

The extension worker's role is to facilitate the farmer group to become aware that it is their responsibility to look for change: nobody will do this for them. The farmer group should be facilitated in looking at their actual situation by using their own, local resources. The extension worker should facilitate the group in identifying their strengths and weaknesses as well as highlighting behavioural patterns. Motivating farmer group members to find new ways of doing things and to try out new solutions is one of the central tasks the extension worker should perform. Facilitators should create a culture of openness and transparency amongst the group members. The extension worker may however encounter challenges around de-politicising issues and focusing on task roles and functions (Henning & Hagmann, 2002:67).

The extension worker should also provide technical advice to farmer groups particularly on production activities. Such technical advice will differ from one commodity to the next and the extension worker could use other technical experts in other specialised fields. The

better practices learned by members of the group will outweigh the operational costs, and farmers will be more responsible and will participate more fully. Mutimba (1997:123) indicates that agricultural extension activities should be based on the exchanging and sharing of knowledge, skills and ideas between the farmer and extension worker; through this, farmers will be enabled to make decisions on those issues that affect their wellbeing.

Farmer group members suffer from illiteracy, poor leadership, poor financial management, and poor management skills and have less access to resources and agricultural services; an extension worker must facilitate and support the farmer group in overcoming these challenges (Abdullahi & Stigter, 2007:1). The buzzword today is empowerment and mathematically, empowerment can be formulated as willingness plus ability (Terblanche, 2007:15). Communication methods are available in abundance nowadays and farmers could use mobile phones for emergencies, and local radio stations for calling farmer group meetings and announcing information about products on the market. Small farmer groups in rural areas could effectively and economically use the radio to overcome high costs in advertising. There is also the possibility of signing an agreement with local institutions to make use of their advanced technological facilities like e-mail and fax machines so that they can access information and or advertise themselves.

Government and donors promote farmer groups for their own objectives rather than farmers' objectives (ACC Network on Rural Development and Food Security, 2000:16) and this could affect the effectiveness and viability of the farmer groups. This situation can lead to a desire on the part of the government/donors to intervene and control the affairs of the farmer group. The consequences of such intervention are usually negative and

translate into a drop in member participation (ACC Network on Rural Development and Food Security, 2000:16).

Farmer group promoters can, on the other hand, have a positive influence if they take on the role of facilitator rather than instigator, if they take account of their concerns, seek dialogue with members, provide them with information and advise them. Facilitation will allow members to make reasoned decisions and listen to other views.

The donor and/or government might select a local promoter who will be able to assist the group by negotiating with the local authorities and any opposition organisations to create a favourable environment. If power struggles are managed, this will also promote viability. Other interventions may come from donors and NGOs (ACC Network on Rural Development and Food Security, 2000:17) as they are always in a hurry to meet project deadlines and will even resort to coercive methods to achieve this. The granting of loans with the aim of forcing the members to feel responsible for their business usually fails, particularly at the initial stage.

Development agencies, if handed properly, can be beneficial, by assisting in areas such as training in technical, business and organisational skills, providing start-up loans, and facilitating information exchange. The costs involved are small for the donor but the benefits to the farmer group are considerable.

Subsidies are an ideal if linked to a clear plan to set the farmer group on the path to management efficiency and economic self-sufficiency. Experience has shown however those subsidies very often lead to the failure of organisations (ACC Network on Rural

Development and Food Security, 2000:18). Subsidies create dependency, and the self-reliance created by members' contributions encourages members' interest, control and transparent management, and is perhaps the best means of ensuring the sustainability.

Most farmer groups lack the necessary management skills to deal with this rapidly changing agricultural economy. Farmers need additional skills and knowledge to enable them to learn how to produce products of better quality and how to market high-value crops and products. Extension workers can expose farmers to new opportunities such as processing plants.

2.9 CONCLUSION

The continued threat to the world's natural resources is exacerbated by the need to reduce poverty and unsustainable farming practices. Food security is a major concern, both globally and in developing countries. Traditional developed strategies of top-down approaches have failed to benefit the rural poor and one of the keys to transforming a top-down extension system into that of farmer-centred and demand-driven one is to organise farmers into groups.

In most developing countries, public extension systems have been discouraged from organising farmers, farm women and rural youth, because these groups could place political demands on national level (Swanson, 2008:xi). In moving from a top-down oriented extension system that is designed to increase agricultural productivity, to a new strategy that seeks to improve rural livelihoods by increasing farm income and rural employment, significant changes will be required in the focus, management structure and

approach of planning and implementing extension programmes. In order to achieve these broader objectives significant changes and improvements are required in the way that public agricultural extension systems are expected to function in order to reach the mass of rural people and capacitate them to become self-reliant.

According to ACC Network on Rural Development and Food Security (2000:21-23), to successfully help poor farmers over the long term, a “cognitive approach to learning” will be required that will increase the capabilities of small-scale farmers and their groups to find replicable solutions to their problems. Group decision making is more effective and sharing of new ideas encourages members to develop mentally, thus improving productivity.

The farmers will need to learn new technological and management skills to begin to produce and market different products, and in this way to improve rural livelihoods. The function of public agricultural extension systems must be transformed from technology transfer to a new system that can provide extension services that enable poor farm households to successfully diversify into an appropriate mix of new agricultural enterprises.

In conclusion, the government should shift from national food security as primary national goal to one of improving rural livelihoods and working to achieve household food security among rural poor. The focus of public extension systems must be broadened to pursue a more diversified farming strategy that includes new high-value crop and livestock agribusinesses. In so doing, the extension approach being used must shift from a top-down model to human resource development that will enable an increasing number of

farmers and women to begin organising themselves into farmer groups and to successfully produce and market high-value products

CHAPTER 3

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research methods that have been employed in the study. The chapter outlines research aspects such as study area, research design, method of sampling, data collection and method of analysis. This study used exploratory and survey research designs. The major purpose of exploratory research is the development and clarification of ideas.

3.2 THE STUDY AREA

The study was conducted at Makhuduthamaga local municipality, which is situated in Sekhukhune district. Makhuduthamaga local municipality is one of the five local municipalities in Sekhukhune district municipality. Makhuduthamaga municipality is highly populated, with 34 traditional authorities that share jurisdiction of the farms like Doornvelden, Eenzaam, Koringkoppies, Schoonoord and Goedgemend.

Most farmer groups apply to several Magoshi (Local Chiefs) for approval of sites for agribusiness, and it takes time just to get the approval. According to the Makhuduthamaga Local Municipality Integrated Development Plan (2002:10), the size of the municipality was estimated at 458 160.56ha with a population of 292 843. In 2005 it was reduced to 209 695ha, mostly because of boundary adjustments by the government. About 99.25% of the

population comprises of Africans, and females form 56.5% of the population. About 95.9% of households live in rural villages without sufficient farming area (Diale, 2005:27).

As part of South Africa's northern middle-veld climatic region, Makhuduthamaga Local Municipality is a warm and dry area, with little rainfall in summer seasons. The area is characterised by scattered dry land sorghum and maize fields, small broiler farming, and vegetable farming around the density populated informal rural settlements. In a casual observation, the common commodities farmed are broilers and vegetables on small scale most for households and the local market. The study was confined to Makhuduthamaga, where such enterprises cover the whole municipality. The villages involved in the interviews for study purposes were Malope, Wonderboom, Vlakplaas, Tswaing, Mashabela, Moomane, Phokwane, Eenzaam, Mamone, Tsatane, Ga-Moloi and Schoonoord. These villages are demarcated into residential sites per household.

Malope, Wonderboom, Vlakplaas and Tswaing are small villages under Kgoshi Masemola alongside the Olifants River. Each of these has an irrigation scheme. Mashabela is a village in a dry land farming area, under Kgoshi Mashabela. Mashabela village is unplanned and each household occupies an area of its own choosing. The livestock graze on any available piece of land since there is no planned area for grazing and or for arable land. Phokwane, Tsatane, Ga-Moloi and Schoonoord are the highly populated villages with more than one Kgoshi. Dry land farming is practised in all of these villages, and production is better due to high rainfall.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND SAMPLING

3.3.1 Qualitative descriptive study

The study used only a qualitative descriptive methodology. The qualitative descriptive approach employed involved interviewing and recording perceptions and practices of both farmers and extension workers. The descriptive study enabled the researcher to get information-rich data directly from individual farmers and individual extension workers. The farmers were interviewed by using both structured, semi-structured and open-ended questionnaires, which allowed conversation and interactions with respondents. The questionnaires allowed the internalisation of experiences and practices of farmer group members. The questionnaire was prepared in English and because of the difficulty the farmers experienced in having full comprehension of all the questions, it was necessary to translate the questions into Sepedi, which is the local language understood by all of the respondents.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001: 394), qualitative research is a form of inquiry into meaning and in which data were collected in a systematic order. Wolcott (1990: 10) added that qualitative descriptive research measures specific information based on opinions and values+ as opposed to statistical data. Thus a qualitative investigation was important for this study, since qualitative methods were useful techniques which sought insights, though loosely structured and concerned with understanding the processes which underlie various behavioural pattern and practices, rather than measurements *per se*.

3.3.2 Population sampling size

A comprehensive sampling procedure was conducted to examine the population upon which the study was targeted as recommended by McMillan and Schumacher (2001: 401). The population of 150 respondents involved in this study comprised subsistence farming households practising grain production on land with a size ranging between one and five hectares, and households involved in broiler production, vegetable production, milk production, maize and sorghum production and egg production, on pieces of land of differing sizes and with broiler houses of varying capacities. The researcher selected these commodity groups because in Sekhukhune District farming in groups is common and in most cases funded by donors and or government departments. As one of the presidential nodal points, Sekhukhune District is a prospective beneficiary of every development initiative in the country, hence this study.

3.3.3 Sampling

Two sampling methods were used, namely the cluster sampling and non-probability sampling techniques. These two sampling methods were chosen precisely because an investigation of individual farmers was done within selected farmer groups, i.e.. Thus, the cluster sampling method was used to select sixteen farmer groups in Makhuduthamaga randomly from twenty-six farmer groups. The selection was done according to different category groups and interviews were held with any available members within a group. The cluster sampling draws cases only from those clusters selected for sampling (De Vos, 2001:197), and the more clusters that are included in the study, the more representative of the universe the sample will be.

The sampling was constrained by the lack of an updated and accurate sample frame. The non-probability sampling method was also applied and 150 respondents were interviewed from the sixteen farmers groups. De Vos (2001:198) indicates that non-probability sampling is done without listing respondents but just taking whoever is available. The non-probability sampling was considered due to unavailability of other commodity groups during sampling. The researcher interviewed the respondents according to a fixed number of selected groups until the desired size was reached.

Secondly, the non-probability sampling was adopted because it allowed the researcher to identify farmer groups with different sizes and categories. This method ensured that the diversity of the group could be covered in the sample (Neuman, 2003:212). The selection of different types of farming system was done in order to have a clear understanding of the challenges and advantages of different farming systems. The other factor was to understand the purpose of forming farmer groups. The quota sample was composed of categories, as outlined in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Quota sample of farmer groups

Different sizes and categories of farmer group				
BFG	DFG	GFG	LFG	VFG
7	2	2	1	4

Note: *BFG = Broiler Farmer Group; DFG = Dairy Farmer Group; GFG= Grain Farmer Group; LFG = Layers Farmer Group; VFG = Vegetable Farmer Group.*

3.3.4 Limitations

The researcher has to translate the questions into the local language, i.e. Sepedi, to enable the group members to interact and answer questions correctly. There were times when the interviews failed due to unavailability of group members. When this occurred, alternative dates had to be arranged. The sampling was constrained by lack of cooperation from some group members. The number of interviewees differed from group to group; sometimes all of the members of a group were interviewed, while in some groups, some members were reluctant to be interviewed.

3.3.5 Ethical considerations

The researcher ensured that ethical problems such as scientific misconduct, research fraud, and plagiarism did not occur in the investigation. The researcher ensured that the participants were protected against stress, psychological abuse, and loss of self-esteem during the interview process. The participants' rights were adhered to in terms of informed consent, privacy, anonymity and confidentiality (Neuman, 2003:119).

Ethical principles were outlined in the introductory part of the questionnaire to make the respondents aware of their rights in the study. These principles were thoroughly explained to each respondent before the interview commenced. The respondents were asked whether or not they were ready to participate.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

The data for this study were collected through structured, semi-structured and open-ended questionnaires. The questions were arranged in different Likert scale and the respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement with the statement or any kind of subjective or objective evaluation of the statement regarding the issues of farmer group formation and extension service delivery. The researcher visited the farmer groups at their various farming enterprises and conducted interviews to each individual farmer. The questionnaire was tested beforehand in order to determine time needed and the phrasing of questions, with a few selected farmers from non-participating farmer groups.

The data collection tool consisted of two types of questions and two questionnaires, one for farmers and one for extension workers. One section of each tool was structured, with questions and a choice of predetermined responses. The other section was semi-structured, with open-ended questions. The interviews took about twenty to thirty minutes per respondent. The number of farmers interviewed per group varied between five and twenty and most respondents battled to give clear answers due to unfamiliarity with regard to answering questions. Some of the members were not available on the scheduled date while other groups had more members than could be accommodated at once.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Data from this study were analysed using the interpretative and diagnostic procedures as described by McMillan and Schumacher (2001:200-209, 397). This means that the research and the conclusions drawn from the study served as a record of behavioural

pattern, problems and prospects as well as practices as perceived in this study by the researcher. In this study a descriptive procedure was used for the qualitative data analysis, following the procedures of Mouton (2001). The study elaborated on the essential farmer group and extension worker attitudes and behavioural dimensions of farmer groups which were not readily amenable to quantification. The analysis was therefore conducted to test the following three hypotheses which were used to assess the effectiveness of farmer groups in extension delivery, and effective extension support for proper group formation and functioning:

- An effective farmer group is a prerequisite for successful extension service delivery.
- Internal and external group dynamics factors influence the effectiveness of group functioning.
- Effective extension support is necessary for effective group formation and functioning.

CHAPTER 4

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter described the research design and methodology used in this study, and special emphasis was provided regarding the use of qualitative non-experimental methods for the evaluation of the data. Chapter 4 provides the results and findings of this study. Findings were based on analysis of the data collected for the study. A total of 16 different farmer groups with a total of 150 respondents were interviewed using the cluster sampling questionnaire. A total of eight extension workers were interviewed using the structured questionnaire.

4.2 PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The farmer groups in Makhuduthamaga were selected from Malope, Wonderboom, Vlakplaas, Tswaing, Tjatane, Maloma, Moloji, Eenzaam, Leeukraal, Phokoane, Mamone, Mashabela and Kome villages. Out of 150 respondents 44% were members of the Broiler Farmer Group (BFG), 13% members of the Dairy Farmer Group (DFG), 17% members of the Grain Farmer Group (GFG), 3% of the Layer Farmer Group (LFG) and 23% were members of the Vegetable Farmer Group (VFG).

Approximately 44% of the respondents, who were from the broiler farmer groups, have established their enterprises at Tjatane, Moloji, Eenzaam, Phokwane, Mashabela and Moomane, and are composed of different categories of farmers i.e. youth, middle aged

farmers and pensioners. The legal names for the broiler enterprises are Ikukeng, Mamodi, Mphe-Mphe, Batlabatlile, Mashabela Enterprise and Kome. Batlabatlile and Kome are the only two youth enterprises, and Mamodi has a few youth members.

4.1 Frequency distribution of farmer groups in the 16 villages (N=150)

BFG	DFG	GFG	LFG	VFG
44	13	17	3	23

Note: *BFG = Broiler Farmer Group; DFG = Dairy Farmer Group; GFG= Grain Farmer Group; LFG = Layers Farmer Group; VFG = Vegetable Farmer Group.*

The broiler houses at the above-mentioned villages comprise two to three houses with a capacity of 1500 broiler chickens at maximum. Ikukeng enterprise is comprised of old women, amongst whom only four can read and write, and Mphe-Mphe has only two men with the rest being adult women: of these only three can read and write. Batlabatlile has youth who can all read and write, Mamodi consists of 12 members, all of whom can read and write, Kome consists of ten members and only six can read and write, Mashabela enterprise consists of five members and only two can read and write and Mme-O-Tlile consists of 10 members, with only five who can read and write.

The vegetable farmer groups with 23 of the respondents, are from Mamone, Malope, Tswaing and Vlakplaas. The legal enterprise names are: Baikemi Youth Cooperative, Mamakau, Malope Gardening and Kgotlopjane. Baikemi vegetable farmer group consists of 14 youth members who can read and write. Mamakau consists of nine members, four of

whom can read and write, Malope gardening consists of 11 members, five of whom are literate and Kgotlojane consists of 18 old men and women: only four can read and write. Matsogo-ga-Bewe is the only group farming layers. This group is from Malope and consists of five women who can all read and write.

The dairy group comprises 13 respondents, and are from Moloï and Wonderboom, with the legal names Mabodibeng Dairy Farming and Mabodibeng Cooperative. Mabodibeng dairy consists of 12 adult members. Four of them can read and write. Mabodibeng Cooperative is a dairy group consisting of seven youth members, and all of them can read and write. The 17 respondents are from the grain group. Considering the numbers of groups per commodity one could detect that broiler farming has more farmers although not conclude that they are doing better.

Although extension workers are generally perceived as key players who should lead the mobilisation of farmers in the forming of farmer groups, other stakeholders had taken the lead in the study area.

Leeukraal. The legal names are Sekokomogo Farmers Association and Leeukraal Farmers Association. Leeukraal Farmers Association consists of 90 adult men and women, most of whom are pensioners. Only 18 of them can read and write. Sekokomogo Farmers Association has 54 adult men and women, mostly pensioners, and only ten are literate.

4.2.1 Formation of farmer groups in the Makhuduthamaga local municipality

The formation of farmer groups in Makhuduthamaga local municipality was initiated with different objectives. Under the previous government, farmers' associations and cooperatives were formed mostly around irrigation schemes since farmers were given subsidies on ploughing units and inputs. The formation of other vegetable commodity groups, broiler commodity groups and dairy commodity groups, therefore most farmers in Makhuduthamaga were not exposed to the farmer group particularly under dry land farming. The operational history of most farmer groups in Makhuduthamaga dates the late 80's.

■ Role players involved in the farmer groups

As shown in Figure 4.1, about 30% of the farmer respondents indicated that the NGO's had initiated the formation of their farmer groups, while 25% respondents indicated that community members were involved in the initiating of the farmer groups. Only 9% of farmers respondents indicated that extension workers were involved in the initiating of farmer groups. About 22% of respondents indicated that Health Officer initiated the formation of farmer groups.

The important role played by the NGO's in the initiating the high figures of farmer groups, was because of the financial support provided. This might cause that farmer groups loses its focus and vision, due to the potential benefits that could be gained.

The 14% initiated by the farmers themselves has more credit than the higher numbers, due to the fact that they are owning it and this could be sustainable.

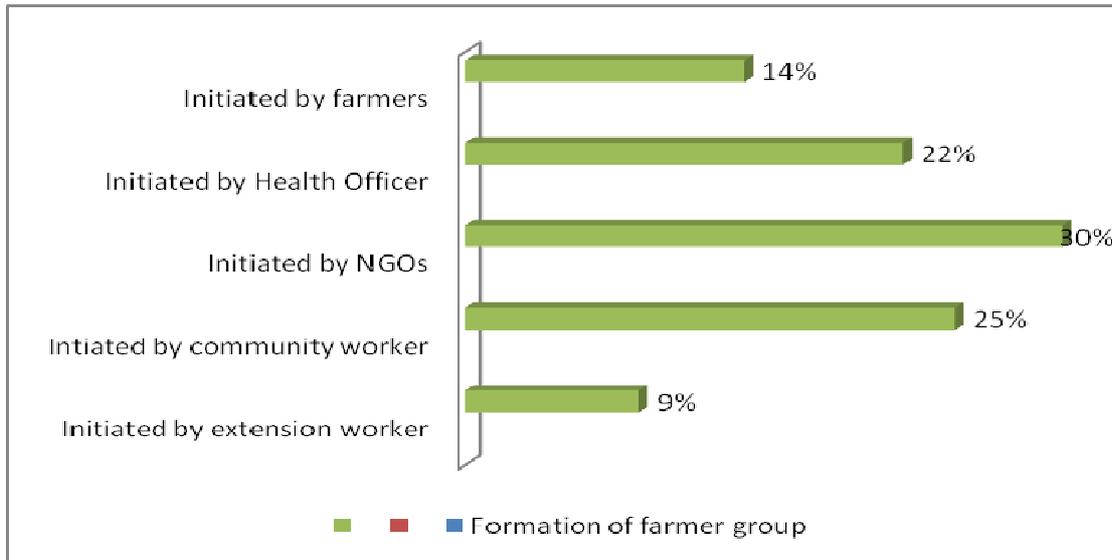


Figure 4.1 Main role players involved in the formation of the farmer groups (N = 150)

4.2.2 Effectiveness of the selected farmer groups in Makhuduthamaga local municipality

4.2.2.1 Perceived effective leadership

Leadership is elected in different ways depending on the type and purpose of the institution. All of the respondents indicated that they had elected their executive committees in a democratically constituted meeting. All farmer groups indicated that leadership was elected through nomination of names and voting by a show of hands for all positions of executive. This was perceived by the group members as a positive impact to the effectiveness of the group.

50.9% of the sampled farmers mentioned that their leaders delegated tasks to members and participated in the delegated tasks. A special feature of a shared leadership system

practised by these farmer groups allows members to identify their capabilities and skills before election for appropriate positions (FAO, 1999: 31).

Leadership style has an influence on the characteristics of a farmer group; therefore, participation by leaders and members in activities of the group is one of the critical factors in group efficacy as highlighted in hypothesis number 2. About 54.2% of the 150 respondents agreed that they have effective leadership, particularly in the chairperson who has authority to organise, delegate, convene meetings and control resources through participation.

Table 4.2: Perception of effective leadership (N = 150)

Degree of satisfaction	No of respondents (n)	% of respondents
Poor	12	8
Fair	57	37.8
Good	81	54.2
Total	150	100

According to Stevens and Terblanche (2004:46) groups require skills in working together and leadership if they are to be effective. Mutunga (2008:4) emphasises that an effective management style would involve sharing of responsibilities. At the level of the smallholder farmer group shared leadership systems, with leadership changing hands in regular and fairly rapid rotation, provide an opportunity for each member to learn the ropes and thus

be in a better position to exercise control over the farmer group. The advantage of shared leadership is to be independent and self-reliant in their activities (Stevens & Terblanche, 2005:8). About 8% of the 150 respondents indicated that they were not satisfied with the performance of their leadership because of poor management, misuse of funds and making decisions without consultation.

4.2.2.2 Perceived satisfaction with communication between members and leadership

About 44% of the respondents were very satisfied about communication between members and leadership, and 35.3% were satisfied about the communication. Respondents were asked to indicate their perceived satisfaction with the communication between leadership and group members. About 90% of the respondents were satisfied with the communication between leadership and the followers. The reasons for this were that committees do invite members to meetings to address issues of importance, giving feedback and progress reports, and inviting ideas from members. Leaders permit members to initiate new developments and tasks are shared amongst them, for example the organising of feeds for broilers, marketing and organising of ploughing units.

**Table 4.3: Perception of effective communication between leadership and members
(N=150)**

Degree of satisfaction	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Not satisfied	14	9.3
Fair	17	11.3
Very satisfied	119	79.3
Total	150	100%

The majority (70%) of respondents were satisfied with the communication between leadership and members. However, 9.3% of respondents stated that communication was ineffective due to poor attention to agribusiness activities, lack of responsibility by members, leaders taking decisions alone, misuse of funds, and failing to give progress reports to members. Respondents mentioned that although the constitution clearly states the term of office for elected executive members, many existing committees delayed the process of re-election. Other executive members had resigned as members of the farmer group and this affected the effectiveness of the group.

Many of the members could not read and write and those who could read were usually given the responsibility of secretariat and chairpersonship positions, also giving them an opportunity to manipulate reports. Poor operational planning, reporting and decision making and planning affect the general efficacy of the farmer groups. The respondents mentioned that some leaders reported as expected, but often when a report was expected

from the executive committee a specific group meeting date was postponed without any valid reasons. This led to mistrust between members and the executive committee, and contributes to ineffectiveness of the farmer group because group goals were not achieved in time.

With reference to hypothesis 1 of this study, which states that an effective farmer group is a prerequisite for successful extension service delivery, about 20% of respondents stated that they were not satisfied with the leadership of the farmer groups, mostly due to financial mismanagement by their leaders, coupled with the fears that abuse of power and autocratic decision making by the leaders of the farmer group may lead to problems in the future. The two concerns as stated above are the key regarding effectiveness of the farmer group. It is of paramount importance to state that finance is the backbone of any organization, such as the farmer group, hence mismanagement of fund belonging to the farmer groups by the leaders invariably will have a negative influence on the effectiveness of the farmer group. Making decision alone will delay progress within the farmer groups due to poor participation amongst the members.

4.2.3 Internal and external factors that influence the effectiveness of farmer groups

4.2.3.1 Group goals and objectives

Stevens and Terblanche (2004:44) report that the highly efficient groups clearly illustrate a shared vision, goals, objectives and motivation in order to provide a focal point for the group activities. About 92.7% of respondents indicated that they were familiar with the objectives and goals of the groups. The most popular objectives that farmer groups set

themselves were addressing of poverty, and the supply of fresh produce to the community and the issue of self employment. The addressing of poverty is a high priority matter through the producing and providing of food to household members.

Other objectives set by farmer groups are:

- Job creation
- Encourage youth in agriculture
- Improved production
- Infrastructure development

The respondents were of the opinion that of these objectives set for their farmer groups, only 60% were achieved.

4.2.3.2 Household income

The seasonality of earnings is conditioned by the pattern of household income from a variety of sources, including agricultural sales, wages, business profits and remittances. Farmers receive an allowance of a minimum of R200 up to a maximum of R600 per month. The allowances are drawn from profits made from sales of commodities produced by the farmer group. Although, the allowances seemed not to be sufficient to sustain family members each month, it somewhat serves as poverty alleviation strategy set up by the farmer group for the individual members of the farmer group and their families in the rural areas. The families of the group members are better off, because parents are able to buy groceries like sugar, salt, milk and soap. The parents are able to give their children lunches for school, and pay social fees like burial societies and family clubs.

4.2.3.3. Cohesiveness

In 2004, the broiler groups around Phokwane, Eenzaam, Moloï and Mamone, organised themselves to form an umbrella committee which enabled them to buy feeds in bulk. They negotiated a storeroom at Vleischboom and negotiated the bulk buying of feeds at low price and delivery cost. Each group managed to organise transport to collect their order nearby with lower costs because it was within a radius of 30 km.

The inputs like fertilisers, seeds and pesticides are used in large quantities such as 1000kg of fertiliser and 500kg seed per farmer. It is therefore advantageous to buy in bulk as a group. This also minimises transport costs since the commodities needed are sold at cooperatives which are only found in towns. The respondents explained that activities in dry land farming take place on arable lands on a minimum of 4 hectares and above per farmer. Hoeing, broadcasting seeds and applying fertiliser are usually done manually while for example controlling stalk-borer. These provisions enhance the farmer groups' collective negotiation, buying power and cohesiveness of members.

4.2.3.4 Marketing opportunities

The 60% of the 150 respondents indicated that they were able to market their produce locally to their satisfaction. It is likely that the pattern of agricultural income from field crops, which is a function of the timing of the market arrivals and prevailing prices, will be markedly seasonal; broiler production markedly bi-monthly and vegetable crops will be markedly quarterly.

Respondents explained that broiler production, vegetable production, egg production, milk production and grain production by most farmer groups in Makhuduthamaga were done on small scale, targeting the local market, and only a few groups produced on a larger scale. These groups marketed to the formal and external markets.

The 40% non-achievement of objectives indicated by the respondents is a challenge since it has a negative influence on the success of service delivery as intended. The non-achieved objectives include infrastructure development, improved production, job creation and encouraging youth in agriculture.

4.2.3.5 Size of farmer groups

Of the 16 farmer groups interviewed had a total of 288 members, consisting of 67 men and 221 women. The average size of the 16 farmer groups differed, with up to ninety members in a group. The sizes differ according to the specific objectives and activities of the various groups. The size of a farmer group is related to its effectiveness, with smaller groups being more effective. Many of the members of the Makhuduthamaga farmer groups are relatives, so strong relationships have developed over time between the members; which leads to open discussion and sharing of more sensitive information.

Figure 4.2 presents perceptions of the respondents regarding what constitutes an ideal farmer group size. In this study, the biggest group has 90 members and the smallest 5 members. In general a bigger farmer groups were found amongst farmers involved with grain production, as the grain farmer groups operate on large areas and the group size influenced the size of operation. Consequently, the two grain farmer groups have the

largest numbers since their activities demand a huge number of people for success as a farmer group. About 45.6% of the respondents indicated that an ideal group size varies between two and ten members, while 31.3% indicated that an ideal group size is between eleven and twenty-five members.

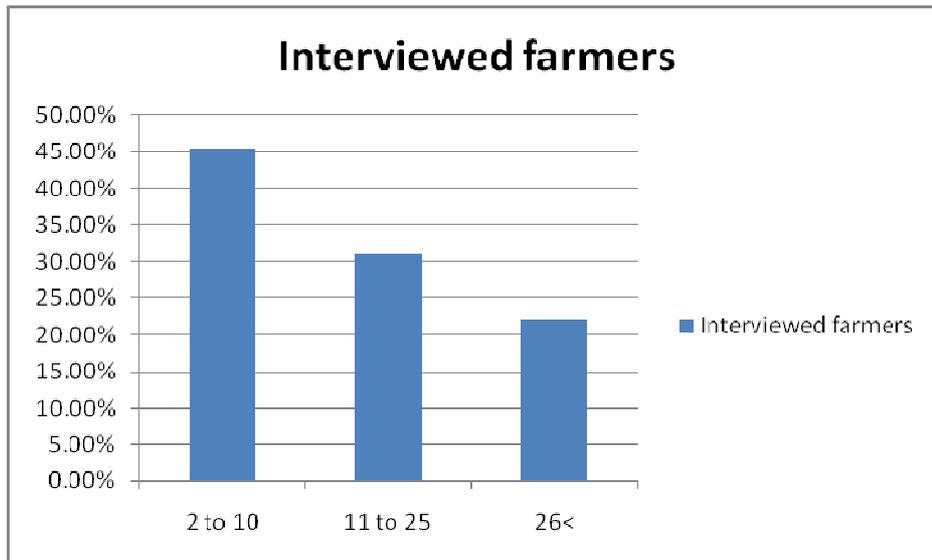


Figure 4.2: Distribution of respondents' perception of the ideal group size (N=150)

Effective groups were found in general to be fairly small with around seven members, democratic and reasonably homogenous in terms of farming system, needs and resources at their disposal (Jost *et al.*, 1997:8). There is evidence that group size definitely has an influence on group functioning. The smaller the group the more time they have to deliberate and participate fully in activities. The optimum size also depends on the situation and circumstances such as task, goal and urgency of the problem (Stevens & Terblanche, 2006:7).

4.2.3.6 Composition of farmer groups

The researcher observed that women are usually evaluated on how properly they devote themselves to household activities and the wellbeing of their household members. Many of the rural families in Makhuduthamaga are headed by single women because many are unmarried or widowed. Those families are the most vulnerable. The women in rural areas usually remain at home, looking after household properties, while men are employed in urban areas and cities and earning wages which are used to develop the families.

Table 4:4: Group size and gender composition of the 16 farmer groups (N=150)

Name of farmer group	Group size	Gender	
		Men	Female
Batla-batlle	5	4	1
Ikukeng	12	0	12
Kome	0	3	7
Mamodi	12	0	12
Mhe-Mphe	14	2	12
MashabelaFarming Enterprise	5	1	4
Mme-O-TlileFarming Project	10	0	10
Mabodibeng dairy	12	7	5
Mabodibeng Cooperative	7	2	5

Leeukraal Famers Association	90	11	79
Sekokomogo Famers Association	54	17	37
Matsogo-Ga-Bewe Layers Project	5	0	5
Baikemi Youth Cooperative	14	4	10
Kgotlopjane Farmers Association	18	15	3
Malope Gardening Farming	11	1	10
Mmamakau Farming Project	9	0	9
TOTAL	288	67	221

The labour market, which, in the past catered mostly to men, has created a situation where, until today, women are responsible for the arable lands. They organise tractors for soil preparation, buy fertilisers and seeds, and after germination of the seeds they start hoeing; all of these are done manually by women. According to the BaPedi culture, cattle are owned by men. The men who are available at home will therefore look after livestock

like cattle and small stock. Table 4.4 supports this statement: Mabodibeng dairy comprises seven men and five women.

4.2.3.7 Policies

Currently, the South African government policies put much emphasis on gender equality, thus indicating that women should be given priority in any developmental activities, such as their inclusion in the farmer groups. The Department of Agriculture Limpopo Province, through the household food security programme, supplies egg layers, vegetable packs and dairy heifers to farmer groups for small agribusiness and backyards gardens, as well as fowl runs which are enough for a family (Magadzi, 2008:3). .

Farmer groups have no facilitators or specific structure of how these meetings are supposed to be run. Although it can be argued that such lack of deliberate structure for these groups could eventually result in giving participant-farmers more freedoms to speak out and share their knowledge, resources, and experiences, surveys have shown over time that it has been a weakness for the strategy. Nonetheless, since the introduction of Farmer Groups, the agriculture in South Africa has been making a steady improvement.

4.2.3.8 Constitution

A constitution is a guiding tool for any institution in order to avoid misunderstanding amongst the members. The nature of the constitution depends on the nature and aim of the farmers. The constitution offers, amongst other things, guidelines and standards for behaviour in the group. For a new group this means a great deal in terms of security and a

good constitution where the objectives are clearly illustrated will prevent tension, frustration and other problems (Stevens & Terblanche, 2006:3).

Table 4.5: Frequency of updating the constitution (%)

12	BFG	DFG	GFG	LFG	VFG
Six months	21.2	21.5	0	80	47.2
One year ago	12.6	32	0	0	16.2
Every 2 nd year	1.2	21.5	33.3	0	1.9
Never	65	25	66.7	20	34.6
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100

Constitutional and regulatory provisos that protect and facilitate freedom of organisations must be present if producer groups are to play a legitimate public role (Bingen, 2008:2). Respondents were asked how regularly do they discuss and revisit their constitution (Table 4.4). The farmer groups with the highest frequency of re-visiting the constitution at least once every six months were the five Layers Groups (80%), seconded by the Vegetable Farmer Group (47.2%). The Dairy Farmer Group had about 32% regularity in re-visiting the constitution at least once every year, while as the Grain Farmer Group ranked first (33.3%) in re-visiting the constitution at least once every two years. Overall, the Grain Farmer Group had the highest frequency (33.3%) of never re-visiting the constitution. The main reason for having a constitution that that was mentioned during the interviews was that the constitution was drawn up at the initial stage when it this was

required by the donor and or the government department at the initial stage involved requires this. The dairy farmer group respondents mentioned that they revisited the constitution regularly because of management issues and the sharing of the available livestock; as being a group they found that changes were sometimes needed, and that required and that brings some changes that need pro-active members.

The farmer groups that updated their constitution nearly every year (like DFG, VFG and LFG) have an opportunity of learning and develop further. Any changes within the farmer group will influence the constitution and the group development of the group. The participation of group members in the development of the constitution enables individuals to learn about social norms and also to influence others' people's attitudes and behaviours. Approximately 80% of the members of the layers farmer group mentioned that they updated their constitution while 20% indicated that they never revisited the constitution. It was discovered that some members lack the understanding in regard to updating a constitution and there was also poor communication between the leadership and the members.

The accumulation of experience and learning eventually induces farmer groups to adopt innovations as initial beliefs about their characteristics are updated, their utilisation gets increasingly efficient and uncertainties about their performance decrease as knowledge improves (Monge, Hartwich & Halgin, 2008:5). The development of the agribusiness skills, gaining of experience by individual members and the adoption of new practices brings some changes which influences the changes to the constitution. The many respondents indicated explained clearly that they lacked knowledge on how to update their

constitutions and were expecting extension workers to should play an mportant role into capacitating them.

4.2.3.9 Frequency of farmer group meetings

An important finding is that all farmer groups were holding meetings within a two – months period. According to the information provided by the individual farmers in the questionnaire, farmers discuss the important issues relating to progress review and the associated challenges, feedback that is given by individual members, review of operational plans and re-planning where deemed necessary by the farmer group. Information on the above activities were provided from the available records and minutes of meetings conducted by the farmer group.

Table 4.6: Frequency of group meetings (N=150)

Frequency of meetings	No of respondents	% of respondents
Once a week	24	16
Fortnightly	40	26.7
Monthly	64	42.6
Every 2 nd month	22	14.7
Total	150	100

Respondents were asked to indicate in two questions their: (i) satisfaction. The questionnaire is attached. With regard to satisfaction with frequency of meetings, 81.7%

were quite satisfied with the frequency of farmer group meetings. About 18.3% were not satisfied. The members who were not satisfied with the frequency of farmer group meetings were 18.3%. About 18.3% of respondents mentioned that it takes too long time before important issues and challenges are addressed. These respondents belonged to percentage of dissatisfied respondents belonged to the groups that were holding meetings bi-monthly as indicated in Table 4.6.

All respondents agreed that it was important to keep minutes of all proceedings in order to have records for reference. For every meeting held, minutes are written for all deliberations with decisions taken, delegation of tasks, time frames and future plans. Respondents perceive the minutes as binding policies of an organisation and it was considered as a key point for effective farmer groups.

4.2.3.10 Decision making in farmer groups

Development of a sound decision-making process is done on the basis of consultation with all members, and by stimulating the creativity and enthusiasm of the group. Respondents were asked whether their group implemented the decisions taken at meetings. These were a few of the decisions taken at the meetings:

- Construction of broiler houses.
- Regular reviewing of sales prices.
- Cleaning of the agribusiness surroundings by members.
- Loans given to members by famer group as institution.
- Contribution of money by members to raise funds.

- Paying bonuses to members every December.

It was indicated that construction of broiler houses helped the members to keep more broilers than before and it was economically more viable to keep greater numbers of chickens. The point regarding sales prices was stressed by respondents, because this helped them to market their produce according to the local market demand.

The respondents mentioned that members received a special payment of bonuses every December in order to encourage members to be committed to their production activities. During the interviews one could discern that group members were receiving some income for their families. A decision was taken to address the challenges that were hindering the group from achieving their goals; this would alleviate poverty, which is one of the factors affecting the rural population. It is suggested that promoting exchange of information and dialogue amongst members and other stakeholders will empower group members at local level for better decision making. Many governments in developing countries are seeking solutions to the problem of decision-making capacity by encouraging greater dialogue with NGOs (FAO, 1991:5).

4.2.3.11 Roles and responsibilities of group members

Approximately 48.5% of the respondents indicated that they knew their specific responsibilities and roles in the group. Those who were familiar with their responsibilities highlighted roles like record keeping, buying and marketing of agricultural produce, minutes writing, finance and organising meetings as some of responsibilities.

Members form a new group with a specific purpose and it is expected of each member to participate fully for attainment of the group's objectives. It was indicated by 38% respondents that they are satisfied with the participation of members for fulfillment of their objectives. According to Beal *et al.*, (2001) as cited by Stevens and Terblanche (2005:7) the more the members participate and work together within a group, the more favourable are their attitudes towards the rest of the group members. Active participation improves accountability, transparency and leadership; therefore, it is the contributing internal factor to the efficacy of the farmer groups.

4.2.4 Factors militating against effective functioning of farmer groups

Lack of knowledge on agricultural policies by members of farmer groups causes mismanagement of agricultural resources like the use of biological, chemical and mechanical technology. . Policy is one of the tools that the Department of Agriculture has to use to capacitate and develop human resources to enable them to manage and preserve natural resources.

The new philosophy of strategic support to the agricultural sector by the Department is participatory and demand-led. This philosophy is supported by five key service delivery approaches namely: municipality focused commodity based value chain analysis project based massification tactic (Strategic Plan2005:4).

Municipality focus was implemented through restructuring by appointing agricultural managers at municipality level to strengthen accountability and improve planning and integration of agricultural projects with the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) (Strategic

Plan/APP, 2005:4).The intention of municipality focus was to improve the departmental capacity to plan and respond to the farmers needs by taking into account the principle of Batho Pele. Municipality focus is a delivery tactic to improve and enhance the local municipality while the number of farmers per extension worker is increasing annually.

The other strategic support philosophy is commodity based refers to where the extension worker works with a single and or more commodity groups in the whole municipality while capacitating farmers on agricultural techniques. The number of farmers could be addressed through farmer groups which will be simple from the interested group. For example, an extension worker might service maize farmers and sunflower farmers. The objective is to encourage extension workers to specialise in their day to day work. This was introduced without any formulation or development of a policy as a tool to be used in implementation.

When farmers are operating as one group with same interest, they could trained on how to add value on their produce. Value chain analysis could be introduced to encourage farmers to think “out-of-the-box”, with a global and holistic approach to commodity development. Extension workers encourage participatory value chain analysis and participatory agroenterprise development (Tiertto, 2009:27). Many small-scale farmers do not produce a product of better quality that meets the market standard, and they lack processing skill and knowledge (Tiertto, 2009:27). The scarcity of infrastructure is a further hindering factor. The value chain process needs extra equipment and this is very scarce and expensive for small-scale farmers.

Project approach is the implementation of a project cycle, in terms of which the Department will start the implementation of the project infrastructure until is completed and functional. The project will have a starting date and a completion date and will be handed over to the farmer group. The Department of Agriculture uses only two programmes i.e. the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme and the Revitalisation of Small Irrigation Schemes to support farmer groups through provision of infrastructures, and many of these projects are incomplete, for example Vlakfontein irrigation scheme and Tswaing irrigation scheme at Ga-Masemola are incomplete. The introduction of Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment as an approach to construct projects is one of the factors contributing to the inability to complete projects due lack of skills, poor management and lack of monitoring. The aforesaid delivery tactics have failed to bring change to the poor rural as expected, since human resources as a challenge was neglected and also extension workers struggle to implement the tactics. Massification of the project brings many financial rewards and farmers are capacitated to produce quality products. The commodity farmer groups will organise themselves to have a production programme with appropriate time frames in order to supply an organised market.

Makhuduthamaga local municipality is estimated to have a population of 262 912 (UNISA, 2001:19), which is projected to grow to 300 206 by 2011, as reported by the Bureau for Market Research at the University of South Africa (UNISA, 2001:19), and the level of education was reported to be low. According to Makhuduthamaga local municipality's Integrated Development Plan (IDP) (2003/2004:19), 51 395 people have not attended school, 12 560 attended primary school, 4 778 completed primary school, 27 738 attended secondary school, 13 058 completed grade 12 and 5 974 attended higher education. The

literacy level covers people between 5 and 24 years of age, making a total of 115 503. The above-mentioned situation causes a high rate of unemployment within most families, and therefore the farmer groups are constituted of farmers who sometimes cannot sustain themselves.

The level of education is one of the key factors in the effectiveness of farmer groups, and 7.4% of the 150 respondents indicated that they are not satisfied with leaders who perform activities of the farmer group alone. There are certain traits that characterise many leaders, which may affect the effectiveness of farmer groups.

It was indicated by 7.8% of the 150 respondents that their leaders have poor vision and give inadequate directives. In addition, 8.3% of the 150 respondents also mentioned that ineffectiveness of leadership is a challenge in the farmer groups. Ineffective leaders do not share in innovation and decision making and this causes the farmer group to be dormant.

Approximately 8.6% of the respondents indicated that they are not satisfied with the communication between themselves and their leaders due to poor leadership style. Respondents mentioned that their leaders lack leadership skills since they fail to give group activity reports regularly. The management of farmer groups becomes more complex when groups act as joint enterprises rather than a membership association offering services. The ability to manage farmer group activities also depends on the management skills that have been built up from other group activities in the past (Lyon, 2003:328).

It was mentioned by 8.6% of respondents that they are not satisfied about the leadership and those group members are not giving their full commitment due to poor relationships. The 8.6% of the farmer group members not trusting their leadership, do affect the effectiveness of those farmer groups. The ability of groups to sustain themselves depends on their ability to build up trust (Building sustainable farmer organizations, 1996:8). Farmer group members sometimes wrongly assume that the silence of other members implies consent and agreement. It happens in many groups that they start off very enthusiastically as a new group. After a period of time the group falls into a stereotyped pattern of behaviour and follows the same pattern of group decision making and operations. Respondents also mentioned various reasons for failing to implement decisions taken at well-constituted meetings.

There are a number of factors that can be seen as influencing the effectiveness and functioning of a farmer group: Poor leadership. Misuse of funds. Committee taking decisions alone. Divided into groups. Changing from agreement. Lack of knowledge. Members failing to contribute.

Developing sustainable farmer groups is a long-term process, requiring a minimum of three to four years (Rouse, 1996:4). According to Rouse (1996:4) the subsistent group environment provides optimal conditions for the group learning of organizational, problem-solving and technical skills. The soundest and safest starting point for activities is cooperation to improve members' income generation potential, not to misuse it (Rouse. 1996:4).

The group members who do not contribute to the organization should understand that, formation of farmer groups should not be seen as the end itself. But the first step in long-term organization building aimed at linking small groups into larger inter-group associations and farmer organizations (Rouse, 1996:4).

Many farmer group members in rural areas tend to take part in such farmer groups because of what they do for them, not for what they mean to them (Goodman & Marx, 1978:193).

Over the past years, men in our society have been expected to work for money in the outside, “real” world while women have been expected to stay home tending to children and keeping house (Goodman & Marx, 1978:311). There is a vast difference between the current situation and the previous situation. Empowering of women is being given priority by the government in all activities.

The respondents of 16 farmer groups consist of 221 women and 67 men. There are only two youth groups in the total of 16 interviewed groups, with 26 members. A family is a group in which men, women and youth are involved in all household activities. Many women in rural areas are unemployed, and this is why it was found to be important to mobilise them to form farmer groups since they like farming. In Makhuduthamaga, 13 124 men and 19 199 women are unemployed (Makhuduthamaga local municipality Integrated Development Plan, 2003/2004:13).

The majority of households are very poor as a result of the rural economy of Makhuduthamaga local municipality, which is unable to provide individuals with

remunerative jobs and/or self-employment opportunities (Makhuduthamaga Integrated Development Plan, 2003/2004:13). It is indicated that 74.7% of the population in Makhuduthamaga have less than the subsistence income, and 23.59% of the population have no income (Makhuduthamaga Integrated Development Plan, 2003/2004:13).

It was mentioned during the interviews that most families are not earning monthly wages and any allowances on a monthly basis. Therefore, this is one of the factors affecting the farmer group members not contributing any money to the establishment of the project or to sustaining the farmer group. The objective of forming farmer groups is to alleviate poverty; hence 32323 of Makhuduthamaga population are unemployed. There are various stakeholders assisting farmer groups with some grants for the construction of projects in order to create jobs, but there are challenges of poor leadership, misuse of funds, divided into groups, lack of knowledge, committees taking decisions alone and changing from agreement which contribute to the farmer groups failing to address farmer group members' needs.

4.3 THE ROLE OF EXTENSION WORKERS FOR EFFECTIVE GROUP FORMATION AND FUNCTIONING

4.3.1 Profile of extension workers

Lack of government policies that create a favourable environment for agriculture could reduce the profitability of farming and decrease the incentives for technological innovation and agricultural growth (Ngomane, 2006:205). Extension workers can only implement the policies that have been developed by government and if there are no policies in place it is

difficult for them to work effectively. The centralisation of extension, according to which scientists, subject matter specialists and researchers have limited contact with farmers and rely on poorly trained extension workers lead to a situation where there may be little technology of practical value to offer (Ngomane,2005). It was indicated by 62.5% of the 8 respondents have a diploma qualification, and 37.5% have a degree qualification which contributes positively to the development of farmer groups. The centralisation of extension workers at headquarters is one of the problems that influence the effectiveness of farmer groups.

The ratio of farmer to extension worker is still a major problem in service delivery as highlighted by extension worker respondents. The extension workers in Makhuduthamaga service individual farmers and farmer groups and that creates a challenge for rendering the needed support.

About 37.5% of the extension worker respondents indicated that they service between 101 to 300 individual farmers plus nine farmer groups on average. This has an impact on rendering the support needed for effective farmer groups.

Table 4.7 Ratio of farmers per extension worker (N=8)

No of farmers	No of respondents	% of respondents
Below 100	1	12.5
101 to 200	1	12.5
201 to 300	2	25
301 to 400	0	0
401 to 500	1	12.5
Above 500	3	37.5
Total	8	100

Regular visits to the farmer groups are not possible, which means that most of the time the groups and individual farmers have to operate without any advice or guidance. For example, 400 farmers may be mobilised to form farmer groups with an average of 15 members per group; the extension worker will have to work with 26 farmer groups, which will have a negative impact on the effective rendering of support. This is the current situation in Makhuduthamaga local municipality: farmer groups are not entirely effective and therefore do not always serve as vehicles that are working collectively towards change.

4.3.2 Number of clients

Approximately 12.5% of the extension workers indicated that they service fewer than 100 farmers, another 12.5% mentioned that one extension worker services between 101 and 200 farmers, 25% mentioned that one extension worker services between 201 to 300,

12.5% that one extension worker services between 401 to 500 while 37.5% mentioned that one extension worker services more than 500 farmers. The role of extension workers is clearly highlighted in the percentages mentioned above. For an extension worker to service 100 farmers who need technical assistance and make a living in a highly demanding communal area, highly demanding an economically viable business plan with highly comprehensive and accurate figures is needed. .

4.3.3 Role players involved in the formation of groups

Extension workers were asked to indicate the respective role players involved in the formation of farmer groups, so that in this study one could be able to understand how farmer groups were formed in Makhuduthamanga.

Table 4. 8: Role players involved in the formation of farmer groups (N=74)

Role player	No of respondents	% of respondents
Extension worker	24	32.4
Farmers	28	37.8
NGOs	10	13.5
Others	12	16.2
Total	74	100

The extension workers initiated the formation of farmer groups in order to transfer agricultural information to as many people as possible. The extension worker's role in the

formation of a farmer group is to facilitate meetings of individual members by inviting them to meetings and creating awareness regarding the farmer group's role in extension delivery. In villages where small-scale farming families have limited access to formal education, more attention should be given to non-formal education and/or extension programmes.

The bottom-up stimuli come from either the farmer group members themselves or from those associated with them, such as the extension workers (FAO, 1999:9). The extension worker respondents indicated that 24 of the total 74 farmer groups were initiated by extension workers, while 37.8% of farmer groups were initiated by farmers. The extension worker respondents indicated that 10 farmer groups were initiated by NGOs and 12 farmer groups initiated by others persons or organisations. Table 4.6 illustrates clearly the role of the extension worker in the formation of farmer groups. It is encouraging to observe that farmers are themselves leading the group the process in initiating the formation of farmer groups, and followed by the extension workers who are associated with them. The 32.4 % of the 74 farmer groups formed in their area of operation do highlighted the extension worker's involvement as remarkable.

Interesting to note that when farmer were asked the same question, respondents indicated that 9% of farmer groups were initiated by extension workers while 14% were initiated by farmers. Extension workers respondents indicated on the other hand that 32.4% of farmer groups were initiated by extension workers, while 37.8% were initiated by farmers. Both farmer groups and extension worker respondents indicated that the extension workers had played a role in the formation of farmer groups. The farmer group respondents indicated

that extension workers had initiated fewer farmer groups (9%) compared to NGOs (30%), community workers (25%) and, Health officers (22%). Extension worker respondents indicated that they had initiated fewer farmer groups. The sample indicated that the extension workers in Makhuduthamaga had played lesser role in the formation of farmer group.

All eight extension workers indicated that they have mainly a role to play in the activities of farmers groups and Bembridge (1993:99) also mentioned that the more the farmers participate, the more favourable his attitude will be towards the group and the following were highlighted by extension workers: Drawing up of constitutions. Decision making. Training of farmer groups. Linking farmer groups with service providers.

The extension worker's role in the drawing up of constitutions is to guide the farmer group members in how to write down points so that the document becomes a managing tool. When groups take decisions, chances are good that the decisions will be more effective than decisions taken by individuals. The extension worker's role is to encourage interaction, share information, ensure errors are minimised and corrected and motivate the making of high-quality decisions (Bembridge, 1993:96).

The extension worker plays several roles, namely adviser in the formulation of goals and objectives, organiser and developer of leadership, as well as problem-solver and instigator. The extension worker is primarily concerned with behavioural change in any agricultural development activities(Adam,1990:7). Depending on the type of farmer group, one can nurture a climate of learning in farmer groups. The aforesaid points clarify the

roles and involvement of extension workers in the effective functioning of farmer groups in Makhuduthamaga local municipality.

. The farmer groups need to be empowered to enable them to manage their own problems. Extension workers should identify and train farmer group members to strengthen the team and to build trust and honesty (Terblanche, 2007:11). About 25% respondents indicated that it is important to train farmers. About 75% of the respondents indicated that they were trained on group dynamics and development stages through workshops. Only 25% were trained formally by higher institutions such as universities. The sample indicates that the 75% of extension workers who were trained through workshops have not been fully empowered.

4.3.3.1 Frequency of meeting farmer groups

The 37.5% of the 8 respondents indicated that the extension workers meet the farmer groups according to a specific program, while the rest meet the farmer group on an ad hoc basis. Meetings with farmer groups are conducted to guide farmers on the drawing up of constitutions, helping them on how to make decisions and developing the farmer group.

4.3.3.2 Experience in working with farmer groups

The 12.5% of the respondents indicated that they had worked with farmer groups for between 5 and 10 years, 75% indicated that they had worked with farmer groups for between 11 and 20 years, and one respondent indicated that he/she had worked with farmers for more than 20 years. Bembridge (1993:23) indicated that extension workers

need to understand the farming communities fully and the conditions and environment in which small-scale farmers and members of farmer groups.

4.4 PROSPECTS AND PROBLEMS FACING EXTENSION WORKERS IN RENDERING NEEDED SUPPORT FOR EFFECTIVE FUNCTIONING OF FARMER GROUPS

The primary objectives associated with extension workers are concerned with transferring technologies related to major crop and livestock production systems, enhancing skills and knowledge among all types of farmer groups and rural families so that they use the most efficient production management practices; and improving rural livelihoods and achieving household food security by increasing income (Swanson, 2008:7).

Extension workers should focus on the fact that current farmers need an approach that is pro-active to prepare themselves for dealing with future problem situations: capacity building is essential (Terblanche, 2007:4). Agricultural practices are significantly influenced by donor agent activities, and many of the agricultural developments introduced have not been fully adopted. Makhuduthamaga is a nodal municipality where private sector organisations are found in numbers supporting the farmers with infrastructure and funds, while extension workers advise farmers on technical aspects of agriculture but with less material support. Farmer group members usually attend to activities that are funded because of the hope that they will be assisted financially to develop themselves.

CHAPTER 5

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 GENERAL CONCLUSION

The number of extension workers has always been relatively small in relation to the size of the farming population to be served, especially when advisory methods have to rely almost entirely on interpersonal communication and demonstration being brought to villages (Bembridge, 1993:23). The 12.5% of extension workers indicated that one extension worker services between 101 and 2000 individual farmer and 25% Of extension workers indicated that one extension worker services between 201 and 300 individual farmers and 37.5% indicated that one extension worker services more than 500 individual farmers. Adams (1990:2) mentions that in the economically advanced countries, the ratio of extension worker to farmers lies between 1:350 and 1:1000, whereas most developing countries are lucky if they have one to every 5 000 farm families.

The farmers indicated that extension workers had played a minimal role (9%) in the initiation of farmer groups. It is emphasised by the FAO (1999:3) however, that the role of extension worker (group promoter) is to mobilize individuals and initiate the formation of farmer groups. About 30% of 150 farmers indicated that farmer groups were initiated by NGOs in order to assist farmer groups financially and for infrastructure development. Mutimba (2005) explains that such support in forming farmer groups is provided more for extracting material benefits, and this tends to create a dependency syndrome that inhibits innovative performance by farmer groups.

The 16 farmer groups interviewed had a grand total of 228 members. The smallest group had five members while the group with the highest membership had 90 members. The farmers indicated that the largest group's main activity was grain production and the group size was equal to its activities. About 45.6% of 150 respondents indicated that an ideal group size could vary between two to ten members, while 31.3% indicated that the ideal size is between 11 and 25 members. The FAO (1999:3) states those small groups, with a membership of between 5 and 15 members learn quickly and understand each other. Stevens and Terblanché (2005:8) add that the most effective farmer groups were found in general to have around seven members.

About 98,2% of the 150 respondents indicated that the best leadership is able to organise, delegate, convene meetings to give feedback and give progress reports and control resources. In addition farmers indicated that group members were given opportunities to initiate new developments.

Approximately 25% of the 8 respondents indicated that it was important to train farmer groups, while 75% of this group indicated that it was partially important to train farmers. The managerial capacity building is necessary to empower rural poor farmers. The role of the extension worker is to facilitate, mobilise and ensure that farmer groups are empowered (Diale, 2005: 14). Knowledge is gained through interactive processes and the participants are encouraged to make their own decision.

About 75% of the 8 respondents indicated that they had been trained on group dynamics and development stages through workshops, and 25% of the 8 respondents indicated that they had been trained formally at institutions of higher learning such as universities.

Adams (1990:77) states that extension workers do not have a good understanding of farm management, and that this makes them unable to reassure farmers about the benefits of proposed changes. Mutimba (1997:48) adds that students at universities are offered training on crops and livestock, but not on the farmers who produce them.

5.2 CONCLUDING REMARKS

5.2.1 The role of extension workers in the formation and support with farmer group functioning

Stevens & Terblanche (2005:2) define a mature farmer group as a self-direction, self controlled body in which every member carries his part of the responsibilities for developing and executing the group's plans. The extension worker will mobilize farmers into small farmer groups in order that they become effective (FAO, 1999:1). An extension worker will guide and advice the farmer groups the approach of small group dynamics i.e. the people learn more quickly in small group situations, there is more face-to-face contact and less room for misunderstandings, and decisions can be reached more quickly than large number group situation (FAO,1999:2).

The farmer groups need to learn new technical and management skill to begin producing and marketing the different products. Swanson (2008:54) emphasized that extension worker should organize farmer groups so that they could gain economies of scale and to more efficiently supply these markets. Extension worker will facilitate the farmer groups and link them to the appropriate subject matter specialist who can provide technical and management skills (Swanson.,2008:54).

5.2.2 The ratio of extension worker: farmers

Zwane (2009:55- 77) reported that extension officers in Limpopo province of South Africa were mainly males, between 40 to 49 years, and Diploma as their educational qualification. General findings in terms of the personal characteristics 29 out of the listed 44 job burnout symptoms. Prominent symptoms among extension officers were cynicism/negativism, agitation, and loss of patience (Zwane, 2009:59).

5.2.2 Effect of internal group dynamic factors on efficacy of farmer groups

Internal group dynamics plays a pivotal role in the functioning of groups in an efficient manner. Most of the parameters of group effectiveness were found to be high in most of the livestock and vegetable groups. Most of the individual farmers exhibited high performance in participation, decision-making procedure, group atmosphere, empathy, interpersonal trust and social support. Differential group effectiveness may be attributed to the temporal and spatial variation in the agricultural practices under the group's jurisdiction.

5.2.3 Effect of external group dynamic factors on efficacy of farmer groups

One way for smallholders to overcome market failures and maintain their position in the agricultural community was through organizing into farmer groups. When acting collectively, these farmer groups were in a better position to reduce transaction costs for their market exchanges, obtain the necessary market information, secure access to new technologies, and tap into the high value markets, which gave them an advantage when competing with large farmers and agribusinesses.

Henning & Hagmann (2002:28) mentioned that many factors influence the formation and the operation of farmer organizations in Limpopo. For example, domestic political environment and the presence or absence of extension agents is among such factors. In most communities in Limpopo, farmer groups have been formed in the context of livestock and crop subsidies with the purpose of collectively overcoming imperfections in the inputs market (securing access to credit and seeds). In other situations, government or donor subsidies may in fact help farmers to scale up production and reach new larger markets.

In this study, it was noticed that participation in specific groups most often depends on the incentives offered by the market demand and natural properties of a specific product. If the demand for a commodity is weak, farmers may not see any incentives to organize around that particular product. On the other hand, if the demand for a commodity is high, there may be greater motivation to join groups and market the product collectively.

5.2.4 Knowledge level of extension workers in group formation and functioning

For an effective group formation and functioning extension workers should be trained to acquire knowledge and skill in the following issues:

A much expanded role: Extension should play a much expanded role. Apart from advice and information on production technologies, farmers need a wide range of services, with improved access to markets, research, credit, infrastructure and business development services.

Partnerships: The main public sector extension agency, the Department of Agriculture (DOA) need to partner with a number of different organisations in the public and private

sector to access the wide range of skills (related to business and market analysis, market development, value addition, community mobilisations and group formation) required for implementing the above broad agenda.

Decentralised planning: Communities need to be supported with skills and resources to develop extension plans. Planning and implementation of extension programmes should keep in view the diversity of extension service providers and should indicate strategies to exploit this diversity.

Resources: Extension workers need more funding support. Funds to be linked to location specific (district level). Farmer groups should be supported with adequate funding depending on their various levels of operations.

Potential options for future support include: Capacity development of block, district and state level officials in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of extension programmes. This should include developing case modules for training on topics related to partnerships, private sector initiatives, innovations in funding and delivery of extension, and skills on better training methodologies, process documentation, and how to learn better.

Hiring expertise to help DoA and line managers on areas such as programme design and development, monitoring and evaluation, market analysis, market development, value addition opportunities and market promotion to help the donors and planners in the government with studies on extension systems in states to take well informed policy decisions.

Promote specific local innovations related to content development for innovative agricultural operations and new experiments in funding and delivery of extension

5.2.5 Perceptions of extension workers in group mobilization and functioning

Agriculture extension primarily deals with human resource development and the transfer of technology and knowledge from agricultural research centres to farmers. Improving human resource development within rural community is essential for agriculture and community development. Extension workers are professionals in the agricultural department responsible for developing individuals in the community. Hence, as the profession of extension work continues to expand, it is necessary to identify leadership skills possessed by the agricultural extension workers in order to gauge their performance in the extension work.

Results from this study suggests that the department of agriculture (DoA) should take into account the leadership characteristics of extension workers and how to improve those competencies as well as organisational commitment in order to upgrade their performance in developing rural communities through extension services.

5.3 COMMENTS ON HYPOTHESIS

5.3.1 An effective farmer group is a prerequisite for successful extension service delivery

Farmer groups emanated from community development concept. Community development is a social process by which people become competent to control and

manage local aspects of economic and social change (Adam, 1990:64). Community development in other cases is used to describe principles by which agricultural and health standards can be improved (Adam, 1990:64).

Bembridge (1993:95) indicated that with the ratio of one extension worker to anything from four to five hundred and even up to two thousand individual landholders in rural areas, it is only possible to reach small fraction of farmers through regular individual visit. In order to reach a large number of farmers who needs extension worker's service and make significant impact on increasing levels of agricultural production, it essential to use mainly group contact methods (Bembridge, 1993:95).

Farming in rural areas is practiced mostly on small scale on small area of operation per individual. The use of group contact through farmer groups could improve and assist farmers to improve production. The farmer group should be able to illustrate a vision, goals and objectives (Stevens & Terblanche, 2005:6). The practical situation of communal farming areas and small areas where farming is practiced, deprive individual farmers to have right vision, goals and objectives. Individual farming in small scale is expensive due to high costs of resources and also unable to bargain for prices.

It was emphasized by Bembridge (1993:99) in this study, that to reach a large number of farmers and make any significant impact, it is essential to use mainly group methods contact. In order to have successful extension service delivery, an extension worker should mobilise farmers to establish farmer groups. The main role of extension services is to ensure that the standard of living from farmers is improved, increased food security and addressing the problems with access to basic needs, for example water. For the members

to be secured, all must participate in both discussions and activities of the group (Bembridge, 1993:99).

The role of farmer groups in extension service delivery is to help the members to improve productivity and reduce costs of farming through collective purchase of resources and or inputs. Farmer groups should have a good vision that describe a realistic and attractive future with excellence standards. Effective farmer group has strong management structure, sharing of responsibilities in a constructive way, good planning and stick on specific strategies.

Farmer groups are able to promote a new technology and also help farmers to access credit and strengthen negotiating power. The extension worker's role is to facilitate and link the service providers with farmer groups. Farmers usually has less finances to buy farming inputs which becomes a challenge in extension service delivery, but through effective farmer groups, group savings could be facilitated in order to enable farmers to finance certain joint ventures.

Working through effective farmer groups has some advantages whereby both famers and government benefit i.e. low information costs through groups, farmers can link up with government extension services by share costs in accessing these services. Government extensionists can reach more farmers, at no increase in cost. Working as a group has an advantage of sharing risks, correct decision making and able to face the institution with one voice.

With references to the findings, it clearly illustrated that other stakeholders are making use of farmer groups to deliver their services to the community and or farmers for example Department Of Health. The former government used farmer groups in developing irrigation schemes and cooperatives were established to bring the farming inputs nearby.

5.3.2 Internal and external group dynamics factors influences the effectiveness of group functioning

Lack of policy from the Department of Agriculture has an influence to the effectiveness of group functioning because there is no guiding tools which could be used by the group's committee to develop their organization. The introduction of philosophy of massification tactic, derived from 2005 strategic plan contributed negatively to other groups as external factor, whereby, bigger infrastructures were constructed like 40 000 broiler houses. The plan of the structures allow farmer groups to keep 40 000 chickens as one batch in one unit. Marketing this batch within a week is impossible particular where quality might not up to the required standard.

Value chain analysis also has an influence to the existing farmers groups due to scarcity of infrastructures for storage, abattoirs and access roads. Farmer groups are unable to negotiate organized market since they not be able to comply the contract demand.

The level of education has an influence to the effectiveness of the groups functioning. The illiterate groups will take time to develop the farming enterprise because they learn through doing where experienced farmers are involved. The group that consists of more illiterate members needs more time on practical issues before they could understand how

they should manage themselves in groups. Henninh & Hagmann (2002:35) explained that umbrella farmer organization in Spitzkop in Limpopo Province had illiterate members but they were taught how to conduct an experiment on soil fertility management. The farmers were guided how to identify their problems and how to analyse them and possible solutions (Henning & Hagmann, 2002:37). This experiment need more time to allow the group members to understand gain confidence before they could make an attempt to do it.

The respondents mentioned points that affect them when they have to implement decisions due to poor leadership, misusing of funds divisions within a group and poor contribution by members. The aforesaid factors has an influence in the functioning of the farmer groups as internal factors. The issue of finance could improve the standard of operation within the the group if well managed. FAO (1999:4) mentioned that internal savings mobilization is considered as a key factor, and the fundamental requirement is transparency in all financial transactions. The financial transaction transparency is coupled with leadership accountability.

The poor contribution by group members delays the farmer group to achieve its goals and objectives. The main cornerstones of farmer group as an organization is to satisfy members' felt-needs first and generate net positive benefits for their members (FAO, 1999:9).

From the respondents it is clear that most of farmer groups are functioning without achieving their goals as indicated in sub heading 4.2.4 i.e. factors militating against effective functioning of farmer groups. Wambura *et al.* (2007:47) emphasized that, it was found that poor leadership and lack of an implementable constitution were some factors

that contribute to the problems of corruption, mismanagement, conflict and lack of clear goals in farmer groups.

5.3.3 Effective extension support is necessary for effective group formation and functioning

The local organization development process starts with the individual's needs (Henning & Hagmann, 2002:50). Coming together is the beginning and keeping together is the process (Henning & Hagmann, 2002:50). An effective extension support should have extension workers who are able to encourage environment that is conducive to farmer group and extension worker should explain the advantages and disadvantages that farmer group formation could have for the group members. Extension worker should make awareness of a potential costs and benefits of the group (FAO, 1999:18).

The key and indispensable factor for the protection and enhancement of the smallholder agricultural sector is the existence of strong farmer organizations that are able, motivate and sufficiently independent to effectively represent its interests (Mutimba, 2005:38). Strong small farmer groups are not going to come about on their own, the process needs to be facilitated (Mutimba, 2005:41). Small farmers need to be mobilized to form into groups and larger, stronger farmer groups (Mutimba, 2005:41).

The best way of extension service is to guide the individuals to create small informal groups (five to 15 members), organized around a common need (FAO,1996:4). Homogeneity of membership is critical and it reduces the likelihood of conflict between group members, which negatively effects performance (FAO, 1996:4). Extension workers

are specially trained on how to work with individuals, and they can teach groups in a collective on problem solving and decision making, both enhance group learning capacities (FAO, 2005:4). The decision making was emphasized by Swanson (2008:xi), that more effective farmer group share ideas in order to improve productivity,

Bembridge (1993:98) mentioned the following points as important when extension worker support groups:

- Farmer should be encouraged to evaluate the present farming situation and human potential,
 - The results of the evaluation should be discussed with other relevant local organizations.
 - Extension worker make sure that farmers selecting members fully understand the objectives, purpose and workings of the discussion group.
 - Extension worker can assist in the formation of groups by approaching farmers they think would be suitable.
 - Ensure worker to ensure ideally the group should be selected by farmers themselves,
 - Members should be of similar levels of agricultural progressiveness, be socially acceptable to each other, have similar interests and needs.
 - The group should appoint its own leadership.
- Extension worker should provide guidance to the executive committee on how to run meetings and discussions, so that the group remains active and learns the value of self-help in obtaining its needs with regard to farm inputs and marketing.

The extension worker should have support the communities with the agricultural technology which will benefit farmers in forming groups, having understand the dynamics of leadership and be able to guide anticipated farmer group and understand process (Bembridge, 1993:253). The extension worker can have a positive influence if he take on the role of facilitator rather than instigator, seek dialogue with the prospective members, provide them with information and advice so they can make reasoned decisions, listen to their views, and adapt the message to take account of their concerns (ACC Network on Rural Development and Food Security, 2000:16).

It was learnt from the research findings that in Makhuduthamaga local municipality farmer groups are supported by external organizations with infrastructure development and funds, while extension workers advise farmer groups on agricultural technical issues. It is now understandable that extension service support the effective group formation, from the literature and research findings.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.4.1 Recommendations for farmer groups

Farmers should organise themselves into homogenous groups. 1Farmers should spend more time doing informal research before the formation of a farmer group. The number of members should be as small as possible for the sake of manageability. Interim leadership should be elected to get to know each other better. Shared leadership through rotation is desirable, to capacitate all members with leadership skills. Youth should be encouraged to

consider agriculture as a fulltime job and as the most paying industry. ABET classes should be attended to learn to read and write, and so that members could better understand the group dynamics. Self-reliance through personal contributions and/or managing the donor fund in a beneficial way should be encouraged in order to sustain the group. A small area should be used intensively to produce quality products in order to compete on the market. Objectives that will address the needs if achieved, should be formulated. Members need to be committed and interested. Gender equity will not have more impact on the effectiveness of the group. The constitution should be understood and regularly revisited to fit with the current situation. Record keeping should be done to keep members informed about progress. This should serve as a monitoring and evaluation tool. Each member should be given a responsibility or a role in the farmer group so that every member can report at meetings.

5.4.2 Recommendations for extension workers

Extension workers should be formally trained on group dynamics. Extension workers should help farmers to help themselves – do not give a person a fish but teach him how to catch a fish. Extension workers should be skilled facilitators, able to manage change both in communities and their organisations. Self-development is essential: you cannot change other people if you cannot change yourself. Extension workers should understand poverty as a relationship of power. Rural poor people need a person who understands their situation, and who can empower them to have courage and belief in themselves.

5.4.3 Recommendations for government

Formulate a policy that will govern all stakeholders who would like to initiate the formation of farmer groups. Government should prevent involvement of other government departments that do not have agricultural background from participating in agricultural activities. Political interference in agriculture as a business should be avoided by applying the bottom-up approach. Negotiations should be held with higher institutions to include human capital (farmers) in all curricula of agriculture where farmers are involved. Policy should be developed on how NGOs should be governed to ensure sustainability of the farming industry. Research should be conducted on the five key service delivery approaches to equip extension workers. The participatory extension approach methodology should be institutionalised. The sustainability of farmer groups in poor rural communities is the responsibility of farmers, government and extension workers, because each of the three stakeholders has a key role to play. The situation in most rural areas of South Africa is such that there are many people involved in farming in one way or another. This suggests that quality facilitation and attention are required, as the social processes of group development are crucial factors for sustainable agricultural development. Working with farmer groups is more cost-effective than working with individuals because the numbers of people who are agriculturally occupied far outnumber the number of available extension workers.

5.5 SOME GENERAL REMARKS ON FARMER GROUP EFFICACY

This study also evaluated the advantages farmers can gain by using efficient small farmer group approaches to solve their agricultural production problems.

5.5.1 Benefits of farmer groups

(i) How farmers benefit:

Working through small groups, farmers can reduce the cost of accessing inputs, production technologies, information and markets by sharing these costs amongst all members of the group (ACC Network on Rural Development and Food Security (2000:1). This means lower individual costs. Lower input costs: by bulk purchasing inputs through groups, farmers obtain bulk sale discounts from suppliers and can share transport costs.

Lower information costs: through groups, farmers can link up with government extension services by sharing costs in accessing these services (e.g. travel costs to the nearest extension worker, buying a cell phone for effective communication, etc.).

Lower cost of financial services: through groups, farmers can open group savings and/or credit accounts offered by financial institutions at reduced individual expense.

Reduced marketing and selling costs: through groups, marketing farmers can share storage, processing, transport and selling costs. Lower costs per farmer mean higher profits (**ACC Network on Rural Development and Food Security (2000:1)**).

(ii) How governments benefit:

ACC Network on Rural Development and Food Security (2000:1) indicated that governments obtain several advantages by working through farmer groups: more cost-effective delivery of extension services to farmers, especially smallholder farmers: working through groups, government extensionists can reach more farmers, at no increase in cost.

Increases small farmer access to financial services: through group approaches, governments and banking institutions reach more farmers at little increase in cost.

More efficient delivery of farm inputs and marketing of output: through group approaches efficiencies in the delivery of inputs and marketing of output are improved. This translates into lower consumer prices.

(iii) Group Formation at local level

Group formation is ideally done by farmers themselves. This process can be facilitated by locally identified and specially trained group leaders, who assist the group development process and act as intermediaries between the groups and outside providers of services.

According to ACC Network on Rural Development and Food Security (2000:2) some basic rules of effective group formation are:

1. Encourage group action: ACC Network on Rural Development and Food Security (2000:2)

indicated that group formation is ideally done by farmers themselves and some basic roles of group formation are:

- Do not impose anything; groups should be based on farmer needs not those of outsiders.
- Work with farmers to identify their problems and prioritize them.
- Help them assess their group self-help capacities, their strengths and resources for solving those problems.
- Assist in identifying areas for group action only where the benefits outweigh the costs.

2. Discuss group formation

Go slowly- forming healthy groups takes time. Work to gain the people's confidence and trust. Listen and show them respect.

Call village meetings. Discuss food security issues and identify how a group approach might be used to help solve those problems.

Discuss goals and expectations. Remind people that the advantages of group action are realized through hard work, self-sacrifice and a clear focus on realistic group objectives.

Focus on individual profitability. Group action must make economic sense to each farmer. Individual incomes earned through the group earned should exceed expenses.

Assess all the benefits and costs of cooperation. Ask the people what they will gain from participation and what will it cost in terms of self-sacrifice. Do all the benefits outweigh all the costs?

3. Establish groups

Encourage small groups (5-20 members). Farmers learn more quickly in small groups than in larger ones. There is more trust and information is shared more freely.

Ensure that group members share a common bond homogeneous (members should have similar interests and backgrounds). A common bond means less disputes and more efficient learning.

Promote groups that are voluntary and democratic. Members should decide through majority vote, or consensus, who joins the group, who will lead them, what rules to follow, and what activities they will undertake.

Help the group choose a name for itself. Names are important. They help build a group's identity and promote member solidarity.

Assist it in setting realistic objectives. Group members must reach consensus on what will be done, by whom and when.

Urge groups to meet regularly. Frequent meetings are desirable during the early learning stage. Stress the need for regular attendance.

4. Aim at group self-reliance

For the benefits of group action to continue even after outside assistance ceases, the groups must become self-reliant and cohesive units. This requires training:

Ensure that leadership develops and gets shared. A group should not depend too much on a single individual.

Highlight the importance of member contributions. Regular group savings are essential and should be encouraged. Member contributions to group activities help build a sense of group ownership and solidarity.

Encourage simple record keeping. Records help the group remember what has been decided at meetings and keep track of contributions, income and expenses. They are essential for monitoring group business activities.

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QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EFFECTIVE FARMER GROUP

SECTION A

GENERAL GROUP INFORMATION

RESPONDEND

Executive	
Non executive	

1. (a) Name of the group

1. (b) Name of the village

2. (a) Are you a member of any other village group?

2. (b) If yes, name the group:

.....
.....

3. (a) Type of group

1. Legal entity
2. Community
3. Commodity
4. Youth group

3. (b) If commodity group, please specify

.....
.....

4.(a) Who initiated the formation of the group?

1. Extension Worker
2. Farmers
3. Other, specify.....

4. (b) Year of establishment

.....

5. (a) Group size

5. (b) Do you have enough time for discussion and express ideas?

Yes	1
No	2

5. (c) What according to you is an ideal group size?.....

6. Gender of the group:

a. Number of male

b. Number of female

SECTION B

LEADERSHIP

B.1 How did you elect your leadership?

- 1. Councilor suggested a specific person.**
- 2. Members elected.**
- 3. Person who initiated the group is automatically a leader.**
- 4. Traditional leader suggested specific person.**
- 5. Extension Worker suggested a specific person.**

**B.2 How effective is the communication between members and leadership?
(Mark With X)**

1	2	3	4
Poor			Very good

B.3 If satisfied with the communication, provide the reasons:

.....
.....
.....
.....

B.4 What are the possible reasons for ineffective communication?

.....
.....
.....
.....

B.5 Does the leader:

- 1. Do everything himself/herself?**
- 2. Delegate tasks to members?**
- 3. Delegate tasks and participate in the delegated tasks?**

**B.6 How effective is the Chairperson with regard to group functioning?
(Mark With X)**

1 Poor	2	3	4 very good
-------------------------	----------	----------	------------------------------

**B.7 To what extend is the group leader providing visioning and directive to the group?
(Mark With X)**

1 Poor	2	3	4 very good
-------------------------	----------	----------	------------------------------

SECTION C

INTERNAL GROUP DYNAMICS

C.1 Are you familiar with your group objectives and goals?

Yes	1
No	2

C.2 Can you mention the objectives of your group?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

C. 3 Have you already achieved some of your objectives?

Yes	1
No	2

C.3 If yes, mention a maximum of two objectives achieved:

.....
.....
.....

C.4 Does the group have a Constitution?

Yes	1
No	2

C.5 If yes, when was the last time that you have discussed the constitution during the group meeting?

- 1. Six months ago**
- 2. One year ago**
- 3. Every second year**
- 4. Never**

C.6 Do you think it is necessary to have a constitution?

Yes	
No	

C.7 (a) If yes, provide reasons

.....

.....

.....

.....

C. 7 (a) If not important, provide reasons

.....

.....

.....

.....

C. 8 How often do the group meet?

- 1. Once a week
- 2. Fortnightly
- 3. Monthly
- 4. Bi-monthly

C.14 (a) How satisfied are you with the current frequency of group meeting?

- 1. Satisfied
- 2. Not satisfied

C.14 (b) Provide reasons for your answer

.....

.....

.....

.....

C.15 Are minutes kept of all proceedings during the meeting?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

C.16 Is it important that minutes are kept of all group meeting?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

C.17 (a) Does the group implement the decisions taken by the meeting?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

C.17 (b) Provide two examples of recent decisions taken

.....
.....
.....
.....

C.17 (c) If no, mention possible reasons for not implementing decisions:

.....
.....
.....
.....

C.18 (a) Do every one in the group knows what his/her role is?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

C.18 (b) Provide reasons for your answer

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

C.21 (a) Do you think it is necessary that group members should know their role within the group?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

C.21 (b) Provide reasons for your answer

.....
.....

.....
.....
.....

C.22 How satisfied are you with your participation within the group?

1 Not satisfied	2	3	4	5 Highly satisfied
---------------------------	----------	----------	----------	---------------------------------

C.23 Who usually addresses on actual matters?

.....
.....

C. 24 (a) Do you like formal way of discussions?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

C.24 (b) Do you like guest speakers?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

C. 25 How often do you have the opportunity to practical demonstrations?

- 1. Often
- 2. Irregular
- 3. Not at all

SECTION D

EXTERNAL GRUP DYNAMICS

D.1 (a) Is the community aware of the existence of the group?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

D.1 (b) If yes, mention communication linkages

.....
.....
.....
.....

D.1 (c) If no, provide reasons

.....
.....
.....
.....

D.2 (a) Are group functioning influenced by traditional ceremonies?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

D.2 (b) If yes, mention some of the traditional ceremonies that influence group functioning

.....
.....
.....
.....

D. 3 (a) Are group functioning influenced by culture?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

D.3 (b) If yes, mention some of the culture influencing group functioning

.....
.....
.....
.....

D.4 (a) Do you represent your constituency on another forum?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

D.4 (b) On what level do represent your constituency?

- 1. Ward level
- 2. Municipality level
- 3. District level
- 4. Provincial level