Supporting women smallholder farmers in Eswatini: Comparing those in cooperatives to those outside of cooperatives.

By

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Development Sociology to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand

July 2024

Declaration

I Ntfombiyenkhosi Patricia Lukhele, declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Masters in Development Sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any University.

Signature: NPLukhele **Date: 11 July 2024**

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to God because He made this possible.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Bridget Kenny, thank you for your constant guidance, encouragement, and patience that has led to this final report.

I could not have undertaken this journey without the unwavering support of my husband, Trevor, and our daughters Minenhle and Busiswa, I am truly grateful to all of you.

I am also thankful to friends and family who encouraged me during this period, and thanks should also go to the people who availed themselves and made this report a reality.

Abstract

In Eswatini, women contribute significantly to the agriculture sector, and in rural areas, women's labour is not compensated. Diverse reasons have led women to organize themselves into cooperatives, societies, and organizations to increase their earnings. Agricultural cooperatives are said to increase access to markets, credit, and to increase productive capacity. Those who operate outside of cooperatives would be excluded from such due to inadequate purchasing power, an absence of productive assets, or cultural barriers. This study examines the support accessible to women smallholder farmers who are members of a cooperative and those who are not members of a cooperative. It compares the two categories based on support received in order to evaluate the usefulness of cooperatives to these women farmers. Qualitative interviews were used to investigate these dynamics with 16 interviewees and thematic analysis was applied.

The analysis shows that a cooperative in Eswatini in the Manzini region under the Ludzeludze constituency does not experience most of the support afforded to cooperatives and those operating individually succeed without the benefits of being members of a cooperative. This was depicted in the areas of accessing markets, credit, and in assessing the impact of social capital on farmers. I conclude that support for smallholder farmers in a cooperative is available in the areas of informal markets, accessing credit, training, and with government subsidies, it is not easily accessible, and that support for women smallholder farmers outside of cooperatives is available in workshops and trade fairs.

The study contributes to the understanding of how important it is to engage women farmers in the kind of support they need and how women smallholder farmers should be given adequate support just like farmers in cooperatives. Important to note is how the study highlights the important role of social capital in accessing resources from the state and NGOs. The study compared women cooperative farmers to women non-cooperative farmers and attention was placed on the kind of support that is available to them from the state and NGOs.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

CFI	Centre of Financial Inclusion
COMFWB	COMESA Federation of Women in Business
COPAC	Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre
EFSRA	Eswatini Financial Service Regulatory Authority
ESWAMCU	Eswatini Multipurpose Cooperative Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
ICA	International Cooperative Association
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
MFI	Micro Finance Unit
MPP	Micro Projects Programme
MSMEs	Micro Small Medium Enterprises
NAMBoard	National Marketing and Agricultural Board
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RDF	Regional Developmental Fund
SNL	Swazi National Land
TAVI	Taiwan Africa Vegetable Initiative
TDL	Title Deed Land
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WFP	World Food Programme

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Research Problem

This study focuses on the support that is available for women smallholder farmers in and outside cooperatives that they receive from the state and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and it compares the support received between women smallholder farmers in and outside agricultural cooperatives. This study established that there is support available to smallholder farmers, but more so for those in agricultural cooperatives. Even though the support is available, the findings of the study reveal that it is not easily accessible to the women in an agricultural cooperative in the Ludzeludze constituency, and in some instances the farmers are reluctant to take up the resources available, hence affecting the quality of their yields. Women smallholder farmers outside of cooperatives have minimal support from the state and NGOs do not reach those in need, however, the findings of the study show that they produce better quality yields.

Smallholder farmers are the backbone of communities and countries. About half of the world's hungry people are believed to be smallholder farmers and three-quarters of those are in Africa (Harvey et al, 2014). Women smallholder farmers face challenges with accessing land. Most women in developing countries do not own the land they work, the land is usually registered under their husbands or a male relative leaving women vulnerable once that relative becomes deceased (Dlamini and Huang 2020, World Bank 2009, Meinzen-Dick 2019). Women are said to account for half of the agriculture workforce in Sub-Saharan Africa (Doss and SOFA Team, 2011) and yet their labour in most instances is not compensated especially in rural areas which has been the motivation behind women farmers joining and establishing cooperatives (Nhlabatsi and Kuezi-Nke, 1986).

In economies that are developing, agriculture is essential for sustaining lives, jobs, income growth, food security, reducing poverty, socioeconomic development, and the environment (Zhou et al., 2013). For generations, farming has given families not only food but also a source of income, enabling marginalized groups like rural women to support their families and send their kids to school and tertiary. The majority of food produced in Africa is reportedly produced by women who work in agriculture. In Sub-Saharan Africa, women are primarily responsible for planting seeds, pulling weeds, growing, harvesting, and selling excess crops like rice, wheat, and maize, which make up over 90% of the food consumed by people living in rural areas (Ben-Ari, 2014). When it comes to secondary crops such as legumes and vegetables, women's contribution is significant compared to men and it makes it seem as though women are the only ones producing these crops (Ben-Ari, 2014).

Eswatini is a landlocked country in Southern Africa, bordering South Africa and Mozambique and it covers an area of 17,634 km2, currently, Eswatini has a population of 1.17 million (UN World Population Prospectus, 2021). In Eswatini, vegetable production is seasonal, with farmers producing maize in the summer and vegetables in the winter, with the most often grown vegetables in the country being tomato, cabbage, carrot, and onion, these are known as the "big four" (Singh et al, 2017). Beetroot, lettuce, potato, green pepper, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, and broccoli are among the other veggies which are mostly sold in the country (Singh et al, 2017). Regardless of their massive contribution to the agriculture industry, women receive a very small number of agricultural inputs and services. 7 per cent of agricultural extension services are provided to women, and they receive less than 10 per cent of the credit given to small-scale farmers and only 1 per cent of the land (Coop Africa, 2012). Eswatini has one of the smallest economies, with agriculture being the mainstay. More than 70 per cent of Emaswati rely on agriculture as their primary source of income, particularly in rural areas (COMESA, 2023). With agriculture being the mainstay for Emaswati, all of the respondents in this study had grown up farming since they were little girls.

This study took place in the Manzini region under the Ludzeludze constituency with a focus on four communities where the farmers were located and that is Mbekelweni, Boyane, Ludzeludze, and eKudzeni. With the focus of the study on agriculture, I interviewed 8 women smallholder farmers outside of cooperatives and 6 smallholder women farmers in a cooperative. The study focused on the nature of support received by farmers to compare the two groups in terms of support received from the state and/ or NGOs.

Researchers have demonstrated that women are the primary carers for their families (van der Walt, 2021, Mehra and Hill Rojas, 2016) when the men have left the home to seek employment in the mines or cities, but also the dynamics of families have led to numerous women-headed households. The responsibility has been up to women to ensure that children are provided with food and nourishment. Women have been able to do so with their skills and knowledge in the agriculture sector which some of them gained when they were young girls. Women in rural communities are encouraged to join cooperatives. Given the challenges that women in agriculture face, cooperatives can lessen the burden for instance by accessing the market and increasing their bargaining power (Baden and Pionetti 2011, Abate et al, 2014). An engagement with literature revealed that so many studies promote the importance of cooperatives and benefits, and when it comes to women smallholder farmers outside of cooperatives, it is about the challenges they face. I felt the subject of support and how it affected women in agricultural cooperatives and women smallholder farmers outside of cooperatives was overlooked in Eswatini under the Ludzeludze constituency. Little is known about how effective the support for women in cooperatives and outside cooperatives is, and there is no study to the best of my knowledge that has compared the two groups with a focus on support. This body of work intends to close that gap while contributing to the increasing body of knowledge in the agricultural sector affecting women.

1.2. Main Research Question

What is the nature and scale of support received by women smallholder farmers in and outside of cooperatives in Eswatini?

1.3. Sub questions

Questions I used to break down the main question in the study

1. In what ways are the state and NGOs supporting smallholder farmers in and out of cooperatives?

2. How does the support or lack of support impact smallholder farmers in and out of cooperatives?

3. How crucial is it for smallholder farmers in and out of cooperatives to receive support?

1.4. Research Objectives

1. To ascertain if smallholder farmers are being engaged in the kind of support that they need
2. To establish what kind of support is available to smallholder farmers
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of the support or lack of directed at smallholder farmers in and out of cooperatives.

1.5. Chapter Outline

Below I layout the organization of the research paper.

Chapter two: This chapter will give an overview of the literature that is relevant to the study. The literature covers the challenges faced by smallholder farmers, it goes into the history of cooperatives and the support afforded to farmers by the state and NGOs. The literature is based on studies in Africa and internationally.

Chapter three: Covers the methodology undertaken for this study which will include the study area and design, the sampling methods employed and brief introductions of the respondents. It will also cover the data collection and analysis used in the study.

Chapter four: Presents the findings on the lack of support for women smallholder farmers in and outside of cooperatives when accessing markets. This chapter delves into the experiences that smallholders in and out of cooperatives have and compares them with a particular focus on accessing markets.

Chapter five: Discusses the findings on the impact of social capital in terms of support for women smallholder farmers in and outside cooperatives and compares the impact of social capital between women smallholder farmers in and outside agricultural cooperatives.

Chapter six- is the concluding chapter which summarizes the key findings of this study and will also bring some recommendations to the fore and discuss the limitations of the study.

Research indicates that smallholder farmers contribute to the global food supply even if they also account for a portion of the worlds hungry. Since women perform the majority of the labour-intensive tasks with the least number of resources, their role cannot be undervalued. The next chapter delves into the literature relevant to the study of women smallholder farmers and agricultural cooperatives.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter will give an overview of the literature on smallholder farmers. Firstly, the chapter will define some key terms and discuss the characteristics of smallholder farmers and agricultural cooperatives which are core to this study. The chapter will then look at subjects broadly that impact smallholder farmers starting with land tenure with a focus on Eswatini and a review of agricultural production in Eswatini. The chapter will then review women's experiences in agriculture. Subsequently, focus on the literature review on the history of cooperatives and how they were introduced in Sub-Saharan Africa with a particular focus on Eswatini. Attention was also given to literature that focused on the role of the state and NGOs when it comes to matters of support for smallholder farmers both in and outside of agricultural cooperatives. Following is a review of the diverse markets that smallholder farmers have access to and access to credit. Later the literature review delves into the reasons that encourage and dissuade smallholder farmers in joining or not joining cooperatives, which is then concluded by a review of social capital and support associated with it when it comes to smallholder farmers in and out of cooperatives.

Definition of Smallholder Farmer and Characteristics

The FAO (2012) defines smallholder farmers as farmers who cultivate plots ranging from less than a hectare to 10 hectares. Smallholder farms in Africa can be slightly larger, but only barely, for instance, in Kenya, the average size is 0.47 hectares, and in Ethiopia, the average small farm size is 0.9 hectares. For small holding farms in Latin American countries like Nicaragua, the farm size can be as big as 5 hectares (Rapsomanikis, 2015), in Eswatini the average farm size under Swazi Nation Land (SNL) is 1.7 hectare per household (African Development Fund, 1995). Smallholder also refers to the meagre resources in comparison to other farmers in the sector (Dixon et al, 2004). Elbehri et al (2013), identify four categories of smallholder farmers. First, there are smallholder farmers who do subsistence farming but are unable to access markets or opt out of the industry. Then there are smallholders with limited access to markets, followed by smallholders with frequent access to markets, and finally, those who are dedicated to commercial farming. This study covered the categories that Elbehri et al (2013) refer to.

Two-thirds of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa are smallholder farmers, and over 70 per cent of the continents impoverished reside in rural areas where agriculture provides their main source of income (Dixon et al 2004, World Bank, 2013). Half of the world's hungry people are believed to be smallholder farmers, potentially three-quarters of those in Africa. Smallholder farmers constitute a sizable portion of the world's population (Harvey et al, 2014). The food produced by smallholder farmers consists of staple foods for household use and it accounts for the majority of food and only a small percentage of products make it to local or international markets (Cousins and Lahiff, 2005, Dixon et al 2004). Although some smallholder farmers may be struggling, they are the main food producers in developing countries. According to Dioula et al (2013), in emergent nations, both urban and rural food consumers rely largely on the efficiency of their local smallholder farmers to meet their food demands. Eswatini is no different, there is a heavy reliance on smallholder farmers.

Definition of Agricultural Cooperative and Characteristics

In Sub-Saharan Africa, agricultural cooperatives are seen as significant players in the growth of agriculture. Individuals who have pooled their resources to provide members with low-cost input, output, and capital resources make up cooperatives (Boadu, 2016). Agricultural cooperatives can be broadly categorized into three groups based on their primary functions. These groups include marketing cooperatives, which have the ability to negotiate better prices, handle, process, or manufacture farm products, and sell them. Farm supply cooperatives, which purchase agricultural inputs and supplies in bulk and grow, process, or formulate them, are the second type of cooperative. They also distribute chemicals, petroleum products, seeds, fertilizer, and feed. And lastly, service cooperatives that offer things like irrigation, artificial insemination, grinding, drying, and transit services (Cropp and Igalsbe 1989 as cited by Ortman and King 2007). The study focused on agricultural cooperatives which are marketing and supply.

Below, I give a broad literature overview of smallholder farmers starting off the discussion with land tenure in Africa.

Land Tenure in Africa

Women in most African nations continue to be marginalized and denied their right to own and access land (Dlamini and Huang 2020, World Bank 2009 and Meinzen-Dick 2019). Women rarely possess land in most of Sub-Saharan Africa. Instead, most female farmers obtain land through a male relative, such as a spouse, brother, or father. This arrangement puts women at risk; a death or divorce can leave a woman farmer landless (Meinzen-Dick, 2019). Studies in developing economies reveal that women compared to men own a small percentage of land such as in Cameroon where only 10 per cent of women own land, in Kenya 5 per cent, in Uganda only 7 per cent of women own land and in Ghana, it was found that women-owned 10 per cent of Ghanaian household compared to 23 per cent land owned by men (Deere and Doss, 2006). The kingdom of Eswatini is no different from other African nations when it comes to land access for women. The country uses a dual land tenure system which is recognized by the Constitution of Eswatini 2005. There is the Swazi Nation Land (SNL) which the King owns more than half, the remainder of the land is privately owned Title Deed Land (TDL). The trust system concerning SNL is based on a patronage relationship, in which the monarch indirectly assigns SNL to the Swati people through a process known as "kukhonta" which takes place at Chiefdoms (Amnesty International, 2018). When it comes to these systems and laws, women are seemingly given the back end of the stick because when they want a piece of land on SNL, under customary law the Chief allocates it to the woman's male relative, her husband or male child, and yet the Constitution permits women to register their private property regardless of their marital status (Manyatsi and Singwane, 2019). The Swazi land tenure system is based on the patrilineal nature of Swazi society. The distribution of land among the homestead's members is governed in this patrilineal community by the homestead leader, who is typically the eldest male. The land is typically given to the head's sons after marriage but is not necessarily a requirement. The wives of the male homestead members are required to work their husbands' fields and have access to land through their husbands (Sachs and Roach, 1983). Land policies in most African states are already in place but seemingly there is no will to implement them, as a result, many women will never own land, and those who are successful face challenges of accessing credit and limited access to inputs (African Development Bank, 2015). Having discussed the land tenure system in Eswatini, in the next section, I discuss agricultural production in the kingdom.

Agricultural Production in Eswatini

In Eswatini, most households are dependent on agriculture for their income, either as small-scale subsistence farmers or as workers for medium- and large-scale farm estates. They raise cattle and grow crops for subsistence, which is how they make a living. The main food crop in Eswatini is maize, which is largely farmed for subsistence. Other small-scale subsistence crops are legumes, tubers, sorghum, horticultural crops, mushrooms, and tobacco. Sugarcane, citrus, and wood pulp are among the cash crops produced (CCARDESA, 2023). The agricultural sector in Eswatini is marred by poor performance which has been a result of varying factors. CCARDESA (2023) and Mavimbela et al (2010) allude to the global fuel crises, rising commodity prices and unaffordable agricultural input costs for smallholder farmers are all results of the persistence of unpredictable weather patterns, poor crop diversification, invasion of alien weed species, and sharp declines in international prices are some of the contributing factors.

Arable crop cultivation and livestock raising are the two main components of Eswatini's agricultural sector. The biggest issue still facing the Swati nation is achieving sustainable and equitable agricultural development. The agriculture industry, which accounts for a sizeable amount of the GDP of Eswatini, has the potential to contribute to the country's future growth and development (Mavimbela et al. 2010). Eswatini agriculture demonstrates a unique binary ownership, production method, and output pattern. Large farms, cash crops, and a comparatively high capital intensity are all part of the sizable agriculture subsector on TDL. Farmers in the conventional smallholder agricultural sub-sector that is involved in SNL, on the other hand, usually concentrate on producing food crops for their own use and selling any excess. In addition to maize, the staple crop, other crops planted include ground nuts, dry beans, sorghum, pumpkins, jugo beans, soybeans, and sweet potatoes. The majority of smallholder farmers use labour-intensive farming techniques, which require significantly less capital and yield very little per unit of land. (Mavimbela et al. 2010).

Some improvements in diverse crop production in Eswatini have been noted. The FAO (2022) reported that the Production of various crops, including sweet potatoes increased by 450 per cent, sorghum by 60 per cent, legumes/ pulses by 225 per cent, ground nuts by 68 per cent, and cowpeas by 2,028 per cent. International developments like the crisis in Ukraine have, however, had a detrimental impact on the overall seasonal performance as the nation has seen major hikes and shortages in agricultural inputs, particularly fertilizer chemicals and seeds. These developments came against the backdrop of covid-19 which had a detrimental effect on farmers and consumers globally.

Some of these challenges may have been new, however, women in agriculture have been experiencing challenges which I elaborate on further in the next section.

Women in Agriculture

In Africa, women account for at least fifty per cent of the agricultural workforce. Moreover, in Africa, agriculture employs 62 per cent of economically productive women which makes it the most important source of income (Doss and SOFA Team, 2011, African Development Bank, 2015). Patil and Babus (2018) assert that women work in agriculture as independent farmers, unpaid farm helpers, paid or unpaid workers on other farms, and agricultural entrepreneurs. In some African countries such as Rwanda, Malawi, and Burkina Faso, the women economically involved in agriculture make up more than 90 per cent (African Development Bank, 2015). In 2018 in South Africa, it was reported that women farmers accounted for one-third of the 847,000 farm jobs in the first quarter (Solidaridad, 2019). In Eswatini, women make up about 11 per cent of the agricultural workforce (World Bank, 2019 as cited by Dlamini and Huang, 2020). However, the exact figures of women farmers are not known. The FAO (2016) states that this is due to smallholder farmers not being recognized in the statistical system of some countries which has resulted in a number of them not receiving any form of support. And yet in a study conducted in Burkina Faso, Kenya, Nigeria, and Zambia by the UNDP, African agriculture depends so heavily on women that efforts to increase the sector's productivity cannot afford to neglect them (Saito et al, 1994).

Rural women work incredibly hard to provide for their families. They frequently manage multi-generational households and pursue several sources of income. Since women's labour is not compensated in rural areas, women tend to organize themselves into cooperatives, societies, associations, and other groupings in an effort to increase their own and their family's earnings. In addition to starting farming, savings, and credit cooperatives, they also enroll in community development initiatives that teach them how to produce and apply suitable technology tools for independence, as well as how to generate revenue from other sources (Nhlabatsi and Kuezi-Nke, 1986). More and more households in rural Sub–Saharan Africa are headed by older women due to younger and stronger men migrating to cities or abroad seeking paid labour. Secondly, the HIV/AIDS pandemic has robbed children of their parents, and they are now cared for by their elderly grandmothers (Squire, 2003). According to Mavimbela et al (2010), in Eswatini at least 68 per cent of impoverished households have a female head of household, compared to 43 per cent of lower-middle households. Agricultural production on female-headed homesteads typically lags behind that of male-headed homesteads in Eswatini because women typically have less access to resources and are often ignored when they ask for assistance with ploughing.

Women produce crops, care for animals, process and prepare food, and work for wages in agricultural or other sectors (Doss and SOFA Team, 2011, Doss 2018, Rapsomanikis 2015). Women have a multiplicity of roles and responsibilities, and these multitudes of responsibilities eat into the time they would spend doing other things such as spending more time in the fields. In many regions of the world where economic and social pressures are affecting the agriculture sector, women's responsibilities vary significantly between and within regions and are changing quickly. Women face more obstacles than men due to the development of contract farming and contemporary supply chains for high-value agricultural products (Patil and Babus, 2018). Sachs and Roach (1983) assert that the development of agriculture has not been intended to exclude or prevent women farmers from engaging in modern agriculture, but their social and economic standing prevents them from successfully participating in the majority of conventional economic development phases. The low participation of women can be attributed to a number of social and economic factors, such as the fact that female farmers have less access to cash resources than male farmers, making it harder for them to buy agricultural inputs and equipment or hire labour and equipment. Furthermore, because men own and distribute the cattle used as collateral for loans, women have very limited access to credit sources. As a result, they lack the funds needed to boost agricultural production without the support of men (Sachs and Roach, 1983).

Garcia (2018) identifies access to education as one of the biggest challenges for women in Guatemala where more than 60 per cent of them are dedicated to agriculture but cannot read and write. As we will see most of the respondents in this study had not completed their schooling years, and most never made it to secondary school. Patriarchal values that still exist in communities inhibit women from succeeding in agriculture and taking up leadership roles, they are not given half the resources that men are given such as fertilizer and training as farming is still considered to be a man's job (Dempsey, 2020).

According to the FAO of the United Nations, increasing women's access to productive resources would enable them to generate 20–30 per cent more food, boosting children's nutrition, health, and education as well as potentially increasing national agricultural outputs by as much as 4 per cent (Van de Velde et al, 2020). Africa's women-run farms might yield a bountiful harvest of development with the correct investments and legislation (Meinzen-Dick, 2019). Women farmers have a number of advantages that help them run profitable farms and contribute effectively to development initiatives that are well thought out. For instance, women farmers work together to do extremely difficult and time-consuming agricultural tasks in exchange for labour or in-kind compensation. Extension professionals may readily use these collective units to deliver agricultural knowledge and training in an efficient manner (Meizen-Dick, 2019).

Oxfam (2003) alludes to how Governments must remove the obstacles stopping women farmers from progressing and denying them access to essential farming inputs. They must guarantee that women have strong land rights and give them the money and assistance they need to engage in farming and adapt to climate change. Such assistance would uphold their rights and increase their output. The support would successfully eliminate hunger and poverty by releasing the potential of hundreds of millions of women farmers (Oxfam, 2003). Research has demonstrated that if women are given support, the economy thrives, as communities, and families. Everyone gains when African women succeed. The women themselves, the children they support, the communities they supply with fruits and vegetables, and the economies they boost (Meinzen-Dick, 2019).

Having discussed the importance and role that women play in agriculture, below I divert my discussion to the history of cooperatives and how they were introduced to Sub-Saharan Africa.

History of Cooperatives and Their Significance

The International Cooperative Association (ICA) has defined a cooperative as "an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise." (Para 1, ICA, 2018).

For the purpose of enhancing workers' livelihoods and defending their interests, cooperative societies were developed even before the fair trade movement. The Rochdale Pioneers of England are believed to have been the first cooperative group, according to the majority of academics. They established a shop in 1845 to sell their products as well as formulated business rules to direct their work (Wilhoit, 2010). This then led to the establishment of an organization that has stood for over a century, representing the principles and values of cooperatives, the International Cooperative Alliance. The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) was established in 1895 in London with the goals of disseminating knowledge, defining and defending the cooperatives' guiding principles, and fostering global trade. Since then, this movement has thrived, embracing every aspect of the economy and spreading across the globe (ICA, 2018). Since the inception of ICA, there has been an emergence of different cooperatives and multi-stakeholder cooperatives around innovation, and this indicates that there will continue to be new kinds that will emerge (ICA, 2018).

The significance of cooperatives is that they are protected by their principles and values. In a democratic and egalitarian manner, cooperatives unite people. The one-member, one-vote principle ensures that cooperatives are democratically run, regardless of whether the members are consumers, employees, users, or locals. Irrespective of how much money a member invests in the business, they all have equal voting rights (ICA, 2018). The values that drive cooperatives are; self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity.

In Africa, the Western concept of cooperatives was introduced during the colonial period, however, it became a strategy adopted as a means to promote rural development, safeguard farmers from being taken advantage of by money lenders, and regulate tax economic activity in rural areas (Navarra and Franchini 2017, Schwettmann, 2000). Once countries in Sub-Saharan Africa gained independence, the governments placed an emphasis on the development of agricultural cooperatives, unfortunately, given the government's active role in cooperatives, this did not bear positive results for the member's needs and in turn negatively impacted the state's finances (Schwettmann, 2000). The structural adjustment programmes implemented in the middle of the 1980s and the democratic changes implemented in the early 1990s had a significant negative impact on state-controlled cooperatives as they necessitated changes. Many African governments adopted cooperative reform projects to foster suitable conditions for such initiatives since this led to a rapid fall in the number and turnover of parastatal cooperatives and the creation of a wide range of grassroots initiatives (Schwettmann, 2000, Wanyama, 2008). Regardless of the challenges faced by cooperatives, they are still considered an effective tool in empowering rural folk and have become more significant for the social economy, they nevertheless confront both enduring and recent obstacles as a result of globalization, the existence of numerous national laws, as well as organizational and governance issues (European Parliamentary Research Service, n.d). In Kenya, cooperative development is a primary strategy pursued by a number of Kenyan county governments to enhance the quality of life for their citizens. Owing to a lack of resources to reach a large number of smallholder farmers, they urge them to establish new cooperatives or join existing ones. The nation’s governments also believe that boosting cooperative membership is essential to enhancing the involvement of smallholder farmers (Miroro et al, 2022). Cooperatives are widely regarded as effective vehicles for social inclusion and political and economic empowerment of their members. In the field of agriculture, agricultural cooperatives boost productivity while offering people access to markets who, in an individual setting, would not have such chances because of low purchasing power, a lack of productive assets, or cultural restrictions (ILO, n.d). The ILO (n.d) also alludes to how cooperatives have a track record of generating and maintaining employment; they are currently thought to be responsible for at least 279 million jobs, and they also support the advancement of sustainable development goals and the promotion of decent work.

On the international level, cooperatives have contributed to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Particularly, the agricultural co-operatives are contributing to poverty reduction efforts by improving co-operative marketing of agricultural products which makes it possible for co-operative members to finance their children's education. (ILO, n.d). Agricultural co-operatives are contributing to the fourth goal of quality education and lifelong learning opportunities by providing the means for financing quality education. For instance, with the support of the ILO, a cooperative in Cote d'Ivoire that sells cocoa and coffee which has over 5800 members. Since 2010, this cooperative has been able to prevent more than 1800 children from being exposed to hazardous child labour by providing them with basic education and vocational training (COPAC, 2018). Co-operatives contribute to the goal of food security and good nutrition by helping farmers. Agricultural cooperatives accomplish this by providing their members with services like collective buying, marketing, and crop preservation for locally grown foods (ILO, n.d). Another sustainable development goal is employment creation, livelihoods, and equitable growth this is accomplished through directly employing people, and indirectly by offering marketing opportunities that support employment and self-employment (ILO, n.d.).

Having established the history of cooperatives, below the literature reviews how African states support smallholder farmers in and out of cooperatives.

State Support for Small-Holder Farmers in and Out of Cooperatives

Research in various countries, in Sub-Saharan Africa including Eswatini has emphasized the importance of women farmers needing support in the various challenges they encounter such as in accessing credit, marketing, and access to inputs. According to the Britannica dictionary online (n.d.), support is expressing agreement or approval with someone or something, aiding someone or something, and possibly funding their needs. Support also refers to holding something or someone up or preventing their fall. There is a definite lack of sufficient support directed at women farmers, yet amazingly these women are still able to contribute to the agricultural industry, to communities, and their families.

Since cooperatives were introduced in Africa, they have seemingly always had some kind of support associated with them, be it the state or private entities. Following independence in the majority of African states, cooperative policies and legal frameworks granted African governments the authority to oversee and administer cooperative issues. Most often, specialized cooperative development departments or ministries were given monopoly positions in the economy by being given responsibility for the movement's promotion, control, and direction (Wanyama, 2008). When it came to agricultural marketing and cooperatives, Braverman et al (1991) allude to how the African government's initiatives to establish cooperatives received help from a number of donors. Donors have presumed that by applying the European model, the success of cooperatives in the West can be achieved elsewhere in the globe. The effectiveness of rural cooperatives is, at best, inconsistent after years of economic aid and major African government initiatives. For processing and marketing export crops like coffee and cotton, cooperatives were declared the state marketing boards' exclusive agents. The Boards gave these organizations the authority to purchase the farmers' produce and prepare it for export. Although the Boards paid the cooperatives little for their services, this monopolistic position guaranteed their survival because it became the farmers' responsibility to join the cooperatives if they wanted to sell their produce and thrive (Wanyama, 2008). The state's participation in domestic markets may be seen to be advantageous in the sense that governments can supply the public goods required for competitive markets to operate effectively, such as market information, quality regulation, the assignment and upkeep of property rights, and the monitoring and prevention of competitive activity (Coudouel and Paternostro, 2005). In certain Sub-Saharan African nations, including Eswatini, marketing boards are still in operation. In the majority of Sub-Saharan African nations, marketing boards were reorganized and assigned responsibility for tasks like creating a market information system, maintaining pricing, and ensuring food security, in part through maintaining supplies (Dlamini et al, 2017). This reform was due to the challenges of numerous marketing boards being ineffective, costly, and unprofitable, consuming a significant amount of resources that could have been used elsewhere. For instance, in Zambia in 1990, the government spent close to 14 per cent of its budget on subsidies for farmers' inputs and food prices for urban consumers. In Lesotho, the government liberalized the maize market after realizing that the Maize National Marketing Board caused significant consumer losses, lowered produce prices, and prevented the growth of the agricultural private sector (Dlamini et al, 2017). This has been commonly understood that it is impossible to simultaneously sustain farmers and provide affordable food to urban populations (Coudouel and Paternostro, 2005). Sadly, many marketing boards do not have the resources to support prices (Kherallah et al, 2000). Co-operatives and smallholder farmers in Eswatini, work with The National Marketing and Agricultural Board (NAMBoard) which is charged with facilitating markets for farmers and assisting them with the production processing, storage, transportation, distribution, and sale of scheduled products (NAMBoard, n.d.). NAMBoard enables farmers' access to markets through their marketing facility, known as Encabaneni Fresh Produce Market. A variety of fresh produce, such as conventional vegetables, baby veggies, chickens, and in the future new lines as requested by the market, can be marketed through the Encabaneni fresh produce market (NAMBoard, n.d.). According to NAMBoard (n.d), they endeavor to see to it that farmer's access to markets is improved by providing training to farmers on their farms or at the Encabeni fresh produce market, where they have a fully furnished demonstration plot, as part of their efforts to ensure that farmers handle food appropriately both during and after harvest. This is an important feature that NamBoard offers to farmers and we will see in Chapter 4 how farmers experience the kind of support offered to them by NamBoard and how far this kind of support goes.

Additional motivation for farmers to join cooperatives was the fact that state-sponsored agricultural finance programs were also managed through these organizations (Braverman et al, 1991). During the period that Wanyama (2008) refers to as the second era of cooperatives which was the liberalization of cooperatives, the first being state-controlled. To keep pace with the neoliberal wave that spread over Africa, the second era aimed to liberalize the cooperative movement by removing it from state supervision. Numerous adjustments in cooperative development in Africa were required as a result of the liberalization of the economy brought about by the aforementioned wave (Wanyama, 2008).

The concept of a cooperative already suggests that the group provides different forms of support in the cooperative. The cooperative is able to support members because the aim is for all of them to succeed, they are able to boost their collective income, bargaining power, and access to productive resources.

In the subsequent section, donor support for smallholder farmers in and out of cooperatives is discussed.

Donor Support for Small-Holders in and out of Cooperatives

The donor support referred to includes international agencies, multilateral donors, and NGOs. African cooperatives have a strong donor presence. This typically signifies that specific cooperative-related programmes are being established or that the cooperative movement is receiving direct assistance. Cooperatives benefit from general programmes aimed at the agricultural sector more often than not. However, a study of nine African countries on cooperatives revealed that Botswana and Eswatini are exceptions because donor engagement there is practically minimal (Pollet, 2009).

According to Pollet (2009), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Bank, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are among the multilateral donors that have significant participation in African states. The most well-known donor for rural development is IFAD, which helps the impoverished in rural areas access financial services. Cooperatives are just one of the many agricultural producers or rural service providers that IFAD works with.

In Eswatini, IFAD has a strong presence in working with rural households. By fostering sustainable employment opportunities, lowering poverty, and enhancing food security in Eswatini, IFAD is trying to assist the country's rural poor and rural residents. In addition to young men and women who have been orphaned, IFAD concentrates on homes headed by women and households impacted by HIV/AIDS (IFAD, 2017). There are three main areas that IFAD focuses on; firstly, IFAD focuses on assisting disadvantaged rural communities in gaining access to land and water for agricultural development. The second is helping individuals in rural areas launch small enterprises, and the third aims to encourage people in rural areas especially women and young people to actively engage in rural development. The intensification of agricultural and irrigation systems in rain-fed areas is supported by IFAD programs and initiatives, which also assist in the growth of rural entrepreneurs. Since 1985, IFAD has provided projects and activities in Eswatini totaling US$44.4 million that have benefitted 41, 555 impoverished rural households (IFAD, 2017).

In research studies, it was discovered that external support is a defining characteristic of agricultural cooperative societies in Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Mali. Various parties are involved in launching groups and providing external support. In Ethiopia, the role of the government is paramount (Baden and Pionetti 2011). A single marketing processing company's organizational initiative may give rise to collective action groups in certain emergent non-traditional sub-sectors, such as allanblackia in Tanzania, which is a tree species found in tropical forests such as Tanzania, the oils extracted from the seeds of the allanblackia tree are used to make soap and cooking oil (Buss and Tissari, 2010), and honey in Ethiopia (Baden and Pionetti, 2011). In the same vein, many industries, like sesame in Mali, have grown extremely structured as a result of significant outside funding from donors and international non-governmental organizations (Baden and Pionetti, 2011).

After outlining the function of donor organizations, the following section addresses the kinds of marketplaces smallholder farmers can access.

Access to Markets- Formal and Informal

Access to markets for smallholder farmers is crucial as it helps farmers progress economically and provides relief for their families. Barrett and Mutambatsere (2005) contend that sustained macro-level growth is bolstered by robust markets, which in turn support significant micro-level prospects for welfare enhancements. Barrett and Mutambatsere (2005) further assert that adoption of more agricultural technologies, for instance, usually results in a decline in farm-gate product prices, wiping out all or most of the benefits to producers from technological change and thwarting farmers' incentives to embrace new technology that can promote growth in the economy in the event there is limited access to distant markets that can take up excess local supply. However, it appears that smallholder farmers find marketing difficult, and this is probably due to the fact they do not entirely understand the concept. Forsey (2022) defines marketing as any activity that a business engages in to attract its target audience towards its goods or services. This is achieved by creating persuasive messaging. The ultimate objective of marketing is to showcase the value of the product, establish brand loyalty, and eventually boost sales. Convincing content that offers prospects and consumers stand-alone value is the main goal of marketing. Smallholder farmers often get the short end of the stick when it comes to marketing their produce considering so many people in developing nations rely on it. Markets do not support the interests of smallholder and emerging farmers since smallholder farmers have difficulty accessing those (Schalkwyk et al, 2012). Markets are not readily available and willing to take produce from smallholder farmers. In a study in the City of Tshwane in South Africa, it was found that an agricultural cooperative faced numerous difficulties before harvesting since it was hard to find ready buyers, which caused the quality of their produce to decline. Moreover, the cooperative lacked transportation to get their produce to market (Shava and Hofisi, 2019). The ILO (2017) lays bare that many small-holder farmers are unable to access lucrative markets that cater to regional, capital, or export value chains. This is often due to their inability to achieve economies of scale, lack of knowledge about market demand, and inadequate expertise in the production techniques required to meet such demand. The importance of market information should be given the utmost attention. Schalkwyk et al (2012) argue that smallholder farmers' use of market knowledge determines how they participate in the market. Farmers can use market data to inform their marketing decisions about finding possible customers, negotiating, monitoring, and enforcing contracts, as well as providing the items that are required. Information about consumer preferences, quantity demanded, costs, produce quality, market requirements, and opportunities are all considered necessary.

Informal Markets in Developing Countries

There are a number of diverse markets but this paper will focus on informal markets and formal markets as these are the ones that are more likely to be accessed by smallholder farmers, especially the informal markets. Most developing countries sell 80-90 per cent of their agricultural goods informally, through farm gate sales, roadside sales, village and rural assembly markets, and metropolitan wholesale and retail markets. Prices are often determined by a mix of supply and demand, trader cartels, and customer loyalty (Ferris et al, 2014). Smallholder farmers have the most access to informal marketplaces because they are less regulated and frequently tax-free. Without grades and norms, value markets are more flexible and so draw the majority of smallholder farmers' produce (Ferris et al, 2014).). Smallholder farmers take into account many factors such as transportation expenses, market familiarity, trustworthiness of potential brokers, and earnings before selecting a marketing channel. In other cases, farmers sell their produce through channels that charge poor rates since they don't know much about the industry or can't seem to find more lucrative markets (Schalkwyk et al, 2012). A study in Eswatini in the Hhohho region found that 72 per cent of smallholder farmers targeted the traditional market and only 1.2 per cent had access to export markets. This was attributed to a lack of information on market and non-market-driven techniques (Simelane et al, 2019). In some cases at the disadvantage of rural women, market information is still only available to literate farmers and those who live in larger cities (Inguita and Sumelius, 2022). Jane et al (2005) assert that the ability of the smallholder farming sector to thrive in production and marketing in the future will depend on improving the functionality of the marketing system that supports smallholder farmers and incorporating the informal marketing channels that are quickly growing in the area. For smallholder farmers, both as food suppliers and as consumers, overcoming the market development obstacle is essential.

Formal Markets in Developing Countries

Formal markets are subject to extensive regulations, with transactions underpinned by a robust legal framework (Ferris et al, 2014). For farmers, it is mandatory to employ best practices in the production and handling of goods while strictly adhering to stringent quality standards. Smallholder farmers must be well-organized, as buyers demand consistent and sizeable volumes (Ferris et al, 2014). A study conducted in the Armenian milk farms found that since it was costly for milk processors to buy from individual suppliers, the cooperative which specialized in milk, because they have cooling tanks that allow for extended storage and frequent quality testing, the cooperative was able to consistently produce high-quality milk. The cooperative was discovered to be a more reliable source of quantity, allowing the processor to continue operating their business (Hovhannisyan et al, 2004). Numerous formal markets rely on conventional cash crops or export crops. However, organized farmers can offer local businesses the opportunity to save money by using locally-grown produce.

According to a study conducted in the Caribbean, supermarkets and public markets in the area were the main domestic marketplaces for vegetables grown by smallholder farmers. The majority of farmers rely on unofficial agreements or no contracts at all, with only 20% of farmers surveyed having formal contracts for access to these markets. The farmers with contracts expressed their susceptibility to retailers' erratic purchases and their inability to get a fair price for their produce (Lowitt et al, 2015). The research conducted in the Caribbean region also brought attention to the agricultural cooperatives' effective group marketing initiatives. However, because of a lack of trust among farmers and the ensuing fragmentation of farmer groups, the study also highlighted the difficulties in mobilizing smallholder farmers to collaborate in response to market demands (Lowitt et al, 2015).

In the next section, I move to discuss access to credit for smallholder farmers with microfinance being the commonly used non-banking system for smallholder farmers.

Credit Access for Farmers

Credit is a crucial tool for increasing the poor’s well-being directly through consumption which lessens their reliance on short-term income (Chauke, et al 2013). The credit problem is exacerbated by formal institutions’ incapacity to lend to smallholder farmers due to a lack of agricultural records, tangible collateral such as land titles, valued assets, and the level of education (Kiplimo et al, 2015, Asiamah et al 2021, Simelane et al 2019). Additionally, financial institutions frequently lack a physical presence close to the places where smallholder farmers work. Again, as they are generally uninvolved in the formal economy, farmers themselves are unable to obtain loans. As a result, many farmers turn to informal financing. Farmers generally are reluctant to take on loans or other financial exposure due to cultural constraints (Savoy, 2022). Credit is a type of contract where the borrower receives money or something of value and agrees to pay the lender back later, usually with interest. Credit can also refer to someone or something's creditworthiness or credit history (Howard, 2023). Smallholder farmers across Sub-Saharan Africa need access to finance to increase their output and quality of life. Inputs such as improved seeds and fertilizer can be purchased by farmers using credit or loans, and eventually, they can utilize these funds to purchase capital goods like irrigation systems and tractors (USAID, n.d, Meisha and Ayenew, 2018). Women farmer's lack of access to credit cannot be overlooked, Kahinga (2023) relates how having access to reasonably priced financial products and services, such as savings, credit, and insurance, can frequently mean the difference between managing a successful farm and earning a sustainable living and building savings to better withstand unforeseen market or climate shocks. Women farmers who encounter these challenges when it comes to accessing credit from formal institutions be it a lone smallholder farmer or a women's agriculture co-operative, studies show how women have resorted to other alternatives to seek finances. Some communities are starting up financial co-operatives that comprise women only (ILO, 2007), yet these associations prove to be challenging to establish due to some members being illiterate and ultimately needing external assistance (FAO, 2016).

Micro-Finance and Farmers

Non-banking financial systems, are proving to be an incredible support for some farmers by providing an alternative to the formal financial system. Microfinance is a non-banking financial system (informal sector) that is used across developing countries, such as Eswatini and India. Kagan (2023) defines microfinance as the provision of banking services to low-income people or groups who would not otherwise have access to them. People can obtain affordable small business loans through microfinance in a manner that is compliant with moral lending standards. Microfinance services are offered to unemployed or low-income persons since the majority of those are living in poverty or have few resources and not enough money to deal with regular financial institutions (Kagan, 2023). Currently, Eswatini's unemployment rate stands at 24.39 per cent in a population of 1.2 million (O'Neil, 2023) hence, there is dependence on the non-bank system. The formal financial sector paved the way for non-banking systems or the informal sector, McKernan et al (2005) state that particularly in areas with little access to the formal financial sector, the informal sector has emerged as a crucial source of social protection. According to De Klerk et al (2013) in South Africa, there are many informal microfinance organizations in both rural and urban areas. Among these are the well-known Village Savings and Credit Associations (VSLAs), Burial Societies, and at least 11000 Stokvels, which are famous rotating savings and credit associations. For subsistence farmers in particular, these savings represent a significant source of funding. These savings and credit societies provide the money required to buy seeds and fertilizer by timing the yearly disbursement of savings and interest to be concurrent with the start of the planting season. The informal sector is claimed to be significantly larger than the formal sector in some nations. The informal sector, which deals with things like loans and presents from neighbours, friends, and family, may be able to get around formal sector constraints. A number of studies have shown that smallholder farmers prefer the informal sector because there is a lack of interest, no long loan procedures and a lack of formal education among farmers, and a lack of collateral (Mersha and Ayenew 2018, Saqib et al 2016 and Sebatta et al 2014).

Below, I move from discussing the subject of finance to the driving forces behind farmer membership in cooperatives.

Why Farmers Join and Do Not Join Cooperatives

Smallholder farmers struggle to access the markets, however, co-operatives have the capacity to empower economically vulnerable men and women by increasing their collective bargaining power in the market, lowering their market risks, and allowing them to take advantage of better market chances (Woldu et al 2015). Studies have established how women co-operatives benefit women in several ways including their self-esteem due to having a supplementary income, some of them having their business skills improved, and the respect and recognition they receive in their communities. Successful women farmer's co-operatives are also able to create employment for locals and expand to livestock (Chatzitheodoridis et al 2016, Groenmeyer, 2013). In Ghana, a study showed that women joined agricultural cooperatives if they had access to credit through the cooperative because this translates to them producing a better yield of produce. Access to machinery was also found to influence women to join a cooperative because machinery is too expensive and smallholder farmers cannot afford it on their own (Asante et al, 2011). Support from the government, companies, and NGOs was found to encourage women to join cooperatives in Mali, Tanzania, and Ethiopia (Baden and Pionetti, 2011).

For some cooperatives, a prerequisite to becoming a member, one must own land and oxen, hence a household is less likely to become a member if it is impoverished, or grows crops other than the usual cereals sold by agricultural cooperatives (Abate et al, 2014, Inguita and Sumelius, 2022). According to a Nigerian study, non-member farmers who have far larger farms, have access to credit, and save more money than members, are not likely to join cooperatives. The likelihood of a farmer joining a cooperative organization will decline as the number of years of formal education increases and the probability of participation will be severely decreased by 46 per cent as a result of the additional farm size increase (Awotide, et al, 2015). Women are not always ready or willing to join co-operatives due to deep-rooted cultural norms. Woldu et al (2015) argue that gender power relations are shaped by dominant gender norms, attitudes, and practices at the family, community, and institutional levels. A study in Ethiopia revealed deeply ingrained sociocultural norms and practices that place women and girls in a significantly lower position than men and boys (Woldu et al, 2015). Furthermore, in Ethiopia women who head their households were more likely to be members of a cooperative due to the autonomy over their lives compared to those who were not household heads (Woldu et al, 2013). On the contrary, Ngomane and Sebola (2019) argue that cooperatives can be a vehicle to overcome cultural constraints, in the South African culture women form groups called “ilima” or “letsema” to help one another with planting, harvesting, and storage. Co-operatives are not free from challenges, since co-operatives are established by the same individuals owning or working on small-scale farms facing challenges, there are bound to be problems.

According to Chatzitheodoridis et al, (2016), women’s co-operatives encounter challenges during the conception phase such as bureaucracy and production, management, and interpersonal relations which could be the reasons that discourage smallholder farmers from joining co-operatives. Women smallholder farmers have challenges of not being able to read and write and their membership mostly consists of elderly women, this undermines the governance of co-operatives, and management hence not being able to access the market (Ngomane and Sebola, 2019, ILO, n.d). This illustrates how support is needed and in this case, extension officers would be of great help to a co-operative with such challenges.

The next section examines the impact of social capital as a means for smallholder farmers to access support in cooperatives and within smallholder farmers**.**

Social Capital

Coleman (1988), drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social capital, states that "social capital is defined by its functions, it is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors- whether persons or corporate actors within the structure. Social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible. Social capital is less tangible yet for it exists in the relations among persons" (p. 98)

The idea of social capital refers to people's capacity to gain advantages and come up with solutions to issues by becoming members of social networks. Social capital is comprised of three elements: the interdependent networks of relationships that individuals and organizations have with one another, the levels of trust that serve as the foundation for these ties, and the benefits or resources that are obtained and distributed as a result of social engagement and connections (Reimer et al, 2008, Grootaert and Narayan, 2001, Poteyeva 2023). According to the concept of social capital, relationships are resources that can help people develop and accumulate human capital (Machalek and Martin, 2015, Coleman 1988). According to Poteyeva (2023), studies have demonstrated that social capital is essential for advancing societal well-being, and a relationship has been shown in studies between social capital and economic growth, personal physical health, academic success, and community employment levels. In the case of farmers, social capital and personal connections are crucial in rural places, according to a KwaZulu Natal study of smallholder farmers, social capital enables them to overcome the institutional shortcomings and resource limitations that define their communities (Sinyolo and Mudhara, 2018).

There are several forms of social capital, namely linking, bridging, and bonding social capital. The bonds that exist within a community or group are referred to as bonding social capital. These relationships are characterized by a high degree of similarity in demographic attributes, attitudes, and the information and resources that are available, which include neighbours, family, and close friends. (Claridge 2018, Woolcock and Sweetser, 2002). The second type is associated with connections that unite people across a cleavage that usually separates society, such as race, class, or religion, and are referred to as bridging social capital. Associations serve as a link between communities, groups, and organizations (Claridge 2018, Nieman2006). According to Claridge (2018) linking social capital describes the relationships that exist between people and groups in various social strata of a hierarchy where various groups have access to income, power, and social prestige. Additionally, it calls for returning the favour. Claridge (2018) provides an example of an NGO operating in a community to carry out government or donor-funded projects and act as a middleman in linking together social capital. Funders frequently acknowledge the value of the established connecting social capital and keep providing funding to NGOs with strong ties to the larger community. Farmers employ all forms of social capital (bonding, bridging, and linking social capital) in their support networks, according to a Chilean study on fruit growers (Cofre-Bravo et al, 2019). Farmers develop and maintain social ties among community members, and without social capital, many facets of social life that need coordination between or within social groupings would be impoverished. This makes social capital among farmers particularly vital (Burton et al, 2006, Arnott et al. 2021).

The chapter's conclusion is covered in the next section.

Conclusion

This chapter has given an overview of women in agriculture and also gave a background on cooperatives, how they were introduced in Africa, and importantly what was so significant about them and how they continue today to be seen as a panacea to combat poverty in the rural areas. The chapter also introduces empirical studies on subjects that have been a challenge for smallholder farmers in and out of agricultural cooperatives, access to markets and credit. The chapter also sought to discuss women's motivation to join cooperatives and what dissuades them into not joining. Lastly, I discussed social capital which I will apply to the study and the women smallholder farmers.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to ascertain the kind of support that women farmers receive if at all. Given that farmers are encouraged to form cooperatives, I was interested in finding out if women in cooperatives receive more support compared to women outside of cooperatives. Within this principle question, I was interested in finding out the kind of support they receive from the government, NGOs, and social structures. Given that women are faced with challenges such as resources and time, the findings in this study also reflect on some of the challenges they face when it comes to the support that may be lacking in some areas. The hypothesis I went into the field with was that women farmers in cooperatives are better supported compared to women farmers outside of cooperatives. The findings revealed that my hypothesis was correct, however, farmers outside of cooperatives seem to do well without the support afforded to cooperatives in this particular area of my research

In this chapter, I will explain how I carried out my research to answer the key question of my study which is: what is the scale and nature of support that is received by women smallholder farmers in cooperatives compared to women smallholder farmers outside of cooperatives in Eswatini? I will do so by presenting the exact methodology and data collection approach, focusing on the research process and data analysis techniques.

Study Area

The study was conducted in Eswatini, in the Manzini Region, which is the most populous region with a population of 355,945. The Manzini region is located in the country's central west and covers an area of 4093, 59 km2. Manzini is divided into 16 constituencies (Tinkhundla) and is bordered on the north by the Hhohho region, on the east by the Lubombo region, and on the south by the Shiselweni region (DBpedia, 2017). Manzini is the commercial, agricultural, and transportation heart of Eswatini (Douglas et al, 2017). Out of the 16 constituencies in the Manzini region, I focused on the Ludzeludze constituency as this rural area is in close proximity to Manzini the city which has one of the country's largest markets. I chose this geographical area as I am familiar with it, and the languages used are English and SiSwati which I both use. Given the proximity of Ludzeludze to the city of Manzini, I thought it would be interesting to ascertain how women farmers perform considering that there are several organizations within their proximity to assist with farming resources.

Study Design

The research design focused on a case study. This involved individual women smallholder farmers outside of a cooperative who were located in different areas under the Ludzeludze constituency which included; Ludzeludze, Ekudzeni and Boyane. The case study also included women smallholder farmers in a cooperative in Mbekelweni. A case study analyses a real-life phenomenon in depth and within its context. The case study is utilized as a research approach in many settings to add to our understanding of individual, group, and organizational, societal, and political issues (Yin 2009, Ridder 2017). The study sought to compare women smallholder farmers in cooperatives to women smallholder farmers outside cooperatives and the form of support that is available to either the group or individual farmers. Research suggests that agricultural cooperatives are the way to go, given the advantages associated with them, and yet there are women smallholder farmers who do not see the benefits of being part of a cooperative.

In-depth interviews were conducted and interview durations were between 30-45 minutes. Most of the interviews were conducted face to face since I was not always physically available since this was a cross-border research, some respondents were contacted telephonically using WhatsApp. The in-depth interviews offered me an opportunity to probe and ask follow-up questions. Follow-up visits were also conducted later to some farmers.

Sampling

The study used snowball sampling to access information from other informants to identify the targeted respondents being women smallholder farmers in co-operatives and those outside of cooperatives. The process of snowball sampling involves requesting key informants for information about specifics of other cases in the field that have a lot of relevant data (Suri, 2011). Initially, I interviewed 5 women in cooperatives and 5 outside cooperatives. I later returned to the field for follow-up interviews, and I ended up interviewing 3 women outside cooperatives and 1 in a cooperative. In total, I interviewed 14 women.

Purposive sampling was also used, I did so to identify the experts in the field who are well-versed in matters of agriculture and cooperatives in Eswatini. I interviewed two officials, one from the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry and another from the Eswatini Multipurpose Cooperative Union (ESWAMCU). Purposive sampling was used to identify these two respondents. Finding and selecting individuals, or groups of individuals, with specific knowledge or experience about a topic of interest, is the process of purposive sampling (Braun and Clarke, 2012).

Respondents

For this research, I was fortunate to have several participants avail themselves and be willing to respond to questions. Below are the various respondents who took part in this study and some descriptive information about each of the respondents. The respondents range from professionals in the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Trade, a representative of the Eswatini Multipurpose Cooperative Union (ESWAMCU), and farmers in and outside cooperatives. Pseudonyms have been used for confidentiality.

I briefly describe ESWAMCU and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade below.

<u>Eswatini Multi-Purpose Cooperative Union (ESWAMCU)</u>

The Eswatini Multipurpose Cooperative Union's goal is to advance the economic interests of its member societies in a way that upholds cooperative principles, and more specifically, to bring together farmers and multipurpose cooperative societies into a single cooperative or organization or their mutual benefit without compromising their autonomy. Among other things, the organization's goals include providing member societies with services for wholesale, manufacturing, processing, and marketing; researching laws that may have an impact on cooperative societies; and advising and assisting members in all legal concerns as needed (ESWAMCU, 2021). The Union brings an important aspect of support to the study. One respondent from the union was interviewed.

<u>Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Trade</u>

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Trade has the mandate to oversee cooperative development in Eswatini. The goal of the government's cooperative policy is to create self-sufficient, long-lasting, and effectively managed cooperatives that meet the needs of their members while engaging in productive economic activity that advances the country. The government also wants to ensure that cooperatives are independent, member-based, and focused on serving the social and economic interests of their members, to continue to engage in activities as autonomous economic entities (Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Trade, 2017). The respondent from this study was a high-ranking, experienced official.

Below, I briefly describe each of the smallholder farmers in a cooperative that were interviewed.

<u>Smallholder farmers in a Cooperative</u>

This research focused on two types of smallholder farmers, those in agricultural cooperatives and those outside of cooperatives. The six women in cooperatives were eager to share with me what they could and touched slightly on their personal lives. Below I describe the women farmers briefly. To maintain the anonymity of the respondents, the name of the cooperative society is a pseudonym.

The first woman farmer in a cooperative is *Cooperative Farmer 1* aged 85 years, and is a member of the Sunset Cooperative. She has been a member since its establishment in 1976. She lives in

Sunset and is not far from their garden scheme. She joined the cooperative when she was a young bride. She never completed secondary school and hence farming was the next best thing for her. Initially, her husband was a member of the cooperative, but when he went for better opportunities in the urban areas she took over his 0.5-hectare plot and has farmed ever since.

Cooperative Farmer 2 who is aged 67 years, also never completed secondary school, was the next farmer met by the researcher. She had recently joined the cooperative, and she has been a smallholder farmer all her adult life, prior to joining the cooperative, she had been farming at her homestead mostly sweet potatoes, and she relied on avocado trees as well. Both these kinds of produce she sold.

The third respondent was *Cooperative Farmer 3* aged 64 years and she also never completed secondary school. She grew up in a home where farming was their way of life. She only joined the cooperative in 1999 seeing that the members support one another and it is easier to achieve goals as a group.

The fourth respondent was *Cooperative Farmer 4* aged 65 years and she never completed her primary education. She started farming when she first got married in 1977 and she used to go to the gardens of the cooperative as an assistant to other members. As an assistant she did not have a plot, none the less she kept going there and she only received her 0.5-hectare plot in 1989.

The fifth respondent was *Cooperative Farmer 5* aged 85, she joined the cooperative since its inception in 1977.

The sixth respondent was *Cooperative Farmer 6* aged 50, who joined the cooperative in 2010 with no farming experience. What led her to join the cooperative and learn farming after losing her job in one of the industrial firms in Matsapha. Having learnt agricultural farming she sells her produce in the formal market, though not consistently.

Below, I briefly describe women smallholder farmers outside of cooperatives that took part in the study.

<u>Smallholder farmers outside cooperatives</u>

The first respondent smallholder farmer outside of cooperatives was *Non-Coop Farmer 1* a retired teacher aged 70 years from the community of Ekudzeni under the Ludzeludze constituency who turned to farming full-time. Being retired meant that she had less money coming in and time on her hands. Given the vast land that her family owns which measures about 6 hectares, she turned to farming, having seen people live off their land. She decided with the help of her family to sell produce to the community and retail stores.

The second respondent was *Non-Coop Farmer 2*, a 52-year resident of eKudzeni who never received any formal education due to poverty, but learned adult literacy through informal education. Her education focused on learning basic mathematics and siSwati. Having not gone through the formal education system, once married she decided to make a living off of farming. Once she tried farming, she realized that she enjoyed it. She used to be part of a cooperative, but it was later dissolved.

The third respondent was *Non-Coop Farmer 3* aged 52 years from eKudzeni. She has farmed all her life but it was only in 2016 when she decided to sell her produce, she realized how it could contribute to her household, especially with paying school fees.

Respondent four was *Non-Coop Farmer 4*, an 80-year-old retired veteran nurse with a plot of 3 hectares. She started farming in 2002 after her retirement and mainly focused on maize with a small vegetable garden. She does not desire to sell her produce, even though she could do so given the arable land she has, however, she farms for her family's consumption, especially since retiring. Both her immediate and some extended family members contribute financially to supporting her and they all reap the rewards as she shares the harvest with her family.

The fifth respondent was *Non-Coop Farmer 5,* a 68-year-old who only attended one year of secondary school. She has a passion for farming like all the other women interviewed, sadly she had a small patch of land that she could use for planting vegetables for her family. She had the smallest piece of land compared to other respondents but it is sufficient for her family. She would love to plant and sell beans.

Non-Coop Farmer 6, aged 65 years, is a retired primary school teacher and has been farming since 1985. Before retiring from teaching, she never had enough time to spend on farming so it was mostly for subsistence. Her family's land is about 3 hectares and she grew the vegetables along with her children, to teach them life skills. Currently, she is working with the Taiwan African Vegetable Initiative (TAVI) by supplying a local primary school with vegetables.

Non-Coop Farmer 7 aged 55 years has been farming since she was a little girl. Originally, she is from Mozambique and only went as far as grade 2 at school. Her land is about 0.5 hectare and she plants her vegetables for both subsistence and informal market.

Non-Coop Farmer 8, aged 45 years was the youngest farmer interviewed. She went as far as high school and never completed and has a plot of an estimated 2 hectares. She is passionate about farming and sells her produce to both the informal and formal markets.

Data collection

The study adopted a qualitative research method, and the purpose of this method in research is to explain behaviour and beliefs, identify processes, comprehend the context of people's experiences, and provide a contextualized view of events (Hennink et al. 2020). Considering that the goal of qualitative research is to obtain depth of information, just a small number of study participants are required (Hennink et al. 2020). There are various techniques used in the collection of data.

In order to identify the farmers, my first stop was the Regional Development Administration (RDA) offices where extension officers are based, and work closely with farmers in the Ludzeludze constituency. They directed me in the direction of where I could find a cooperative and shared a few contact numbers of some smallholder farmers. I am not familiar with the entire constituency as it is fairly big, so this information was of great help. Both structured and open-ended questions from a questionnaire were employed in the interviews. Open-ended questionnaires do not minimize the respondent in giving an answer, they allow the respondent to give their knowledge and sometimes feelings about the subject at hand (Zull, 2015). The respondents when answering a question went beyond the scope of the question, and this allowed the respondents and I to engage in more of a conversation and I ended up being taught about some of the processes in farming. The responses were noted down on an exam pad as well as recorded on a voice recorder with the respondent's permission. The questions were translated into SiSwati so that the respondents could understand the questions and not feel intimidated by me. SiSwati is my first language, hence there were no challenges with translating the questions. With the women farmers, and with the professionals, the interviews lasted between thirty and forty-five minutes. Data was collected in October 2022, July 2023, and September 2023.

Secondary data was utilized in this study and this included, newspaper articles, the internet, online journals, documents, and policies.

Data Analysis

To analyze my data, I used thematic analysis. There were steps that I followed before analyzing. Transcribing interviews and going over the transcripts several times constitute the first step. A researcher should actively scan the transcript for patterns and meanings, making note of possible coding categories as they are read. After that, the first codes are generated. Though they are not yet themes, codes help to organize the material into meaningful pieces. A search for themes may start when the data has been coded and the materials that belong to the same codes have been gathered; this will eventually result in the final report (Jason and Glenwick, 2016).

Once I had collected my data for this study, I followed the steps put forward by Jason and Glenwick (2016) but my initial step was to first translate my data from SiSwati to English, with some assistance from a community member with the names of some of the indigenous vegetables, which I was not familiar with.

Ethics

Ethical clearance was first obtained from the faculty before proceeding with the study. The study was conducted when governments were relaxing their covid-19 restrictions, and human physical interaction was one of those restrictions that were relaxed. As the researcher, I still had to take measures to mitigate the spread of the virus, to protect the respondents, especially since most of them were elderly and they are high-risk. I did this by wearing a face mask when in close proximity but since the interviews took place mostly outdoors, the risk of spreading or contracting the virus was mitigated since I observed the 1.5m distance between the respondents and myself. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents through comprehensive participation sheets which I verbally translated to siSwati for the farmers who did not understand English and also informed consent forms were signed by the farmers. Participants in the study were first informed that their participation would be voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. Pseudonyms have been used throughout this report to maintain confidentiality, and the particular cooperative society referred to in this report will also be given a pseudonym.

Conclusion

This chapter gave an overview of the data collected in the field and the methodology employed. The chapter introduced the respondents and their significance to the study. The data collection method applied and the steps followed in thematic analysis. I ended with a description of the ethics that were upheld in the field. In the following chapter, I address the crucial role that markets play for both categories of farmers, which helps illuminate some of the distinctions between the two groups when it comes to the support from the state and NGOs and the lack of support from the two entities. In chapter 5, I move to discuss social capital which allows individuals and groups to work together and access benefits which will demonstrate that support for both categories of farmers is accessed differently with a look at the socio-economic backgrounds of the farmers and if it plays a role. Finally, chapter 6 concludes and offers some recommendations.

Chapter 4: Markets

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the findings based on the farmers' access or lack of access to markets with a look into how much support is afforded to farmers. Accessing markets is crucial for farmers as it allows farmers to grow their customer base and increase their revenue. With most smallholder farmers based in rural areas which is the case for the respondents in this study and some living in poverty, access to markets has helped farmers under the Ludzeludze constituency support their families. Support for farmers in both categories has been lacking in this constituency, the study will highlight the different experiences of both categories in accessing the market. The chapter will first give a brief history of cooperatives in Eswatini, followed by an explanation of how Sunset Cooperative Society [1](which is a pseudonym) became established. This will then be succeeded by the motivation for farmers to join a cooperative, a discussion on the findings of choice of markets that farmers choose, and the reasons behind that. Then the chapter will look into the role of the state and other stakeholders and their role in assisting farmers access the market. I will look into the challenges impeding farmers from the markets and what farmers need to succeed. At every section comparison will be made between the two categories of farmers.

Cooperatives in Eswatini

Co-operatives in Eswatini were first introduced in 1931 and the primary goal of encouraging cooperatives was to advance rural development for indigenous Swazi farmers. Cooperative development was sluggish during this time, with few organizations registered, especially in the agricultural sector (Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Trade, 2017). Between 1963 and 1968, fourteen farmer co-operatives commonly known as multipurpose co-operatives were registered for tobacco, sugar cane, and pineapple production. In 1976 the Co-operative Development Centre (CODEC) was established to provide cooperative training and education. Since its establishment, CODEC has managed to train over 900 graduates in cooperative management. Currently, co-operatives in the Kingdom have seen a steady increase, as of 2017 there were 102 registered co-operatives in the Manzini region. Despite the steady growth, co-operatives have not been without

[1] Sunset Cooperative Society is a pseudonym.

challenges. The Ministry of Commerce points out low levels of good governance, mismanagement, and poor investment decisions (Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade, 2017). Added to the challenges of multipurpose co-operatives, the majority of them are elderly persons and this puts them at risk of dying out especially if there is a challenge in roping in the youth, which currently is the case (Ministry of Commerce, 2017). The findings in this research attest to this challenge as most of the respondents were above the age of 60 years.

Sunset Cooperative Society

The history of the establishment of the cooperative was given by Cooperative Farmer 5 who has been with the cooperative since its inception. In Eswatini, Swazis usually gain access to land by being a member of a homestead on Swazi Nation Land (SNL). Recall that in the literature review, I discuss the dual land system in Eswatini and those responsible for holding the land in trust on behalf of the King. Cooperative Farmer 5 related that in 1975 a piece of land that was estimated to be 14 hectares was occupied by 4 homesteads in one of the communities under the Ludzeludze constituency, which today is the Sunset Cooperative Society which has 22 members. The four homesteads were removed from the area and placed elsewhere. This was done by the inner council (Bandla Ncane) representing the chiefdom (Umphakatsi) of Mbekelweni. The inner council is members of the community elected by the community, these council members meet weekly in the chiefdoms to attend to matters that concern the community. Back in 1977, the community was looking at starting a development project, and the land that was identified for the development was occupied by four homesteads. These homesteads were relocated within the community and were not compensated. The land that they were given was smaller compared to the land they had previously occupied. The inner council with the support from Government, fenced the area they had identified for the cooperatives and partitioned the land. In 1977, the community was encouraged to join a cooperative, the families that were relocated, were one of the first people offered a plot, and at the time the joining fee for the cooperative was E10.00, which is equivalent to the South African rand, currently the joining fee is E600.00. Cooperative Farmer 5, an 85-year-old cooperative member, was one of the people who was relocated. When she joined the cooperative she was given 0.5 hectares and later given 0.8 hectares. This was done because she was one of the first people to join the cooperative. During this period of having the cooperative established, the members were then taught how a cooperative works, and they have been using those guidelines till today. Initially, the cooperative had a number of organizations from the United States of America and Israel support them, currently, they do not have outside or foreign donors supporting the like before.

In conducting the study, I interviewed 6 women farmers in a cooperative, and they all had varying experiences when it came to marketing their produce. First I discuss the findings on the determinants of the farmers in and out of a cooperative in joining a cooperative or not joining one.

Figure 1: Part of Sunset Cooperative Society **(Source**: Author, September 2023. Fieldwork photos)

Determinants for Women Farmers Joining Cooperatives

The findings revealed that cooperatives have thrown a lifeline to many families, as being part of a cooperative has allowed farmers to provide for their families. One of the ways that a cooperative has supported farmers is in the sharing of the profits that happens at the end of the year. Poverty is a reality for many Emaswati, being a member of a cooperative does not necessarily mean that poverty becomes a thing of the past for these farmers, but it does mean that they can make ends meet. Other scholars have elaborated on the benefits for farmers being part of a cooperative (Badden and Pionetti, 2011, Doss and SOFA Team 2011, African Development Bank 2015). Out of the 6 farmers in a cooperative that I interviewed, four of the respondents have been part of the cooperative since its inception in 1977, one joined in 2010 after having lost a job in the firm in Matsapha, and another had been part of it for three months before my first fieldwork. The overarching response to why they joined a cooperative, was that it has been a lifeline for supporting their families,

Cooperative Farmer 4 stated: "What led me to join the cooperative is that we do get some money out of it, it has helped us with paying school fees and buying uniforms, we are able to get by with the money that we make." (October 2022)

Cooperative Farmer 2: "I have been farming since I was a child and I recently joined the cooperative. I sell a lot of sweet potatoes and avocados, I have been selling to individuals in the community and hawkers but I felt like it was not sustainable so I decided to join the cooperative to be part of a business, to continuously make money because as a lone farmer, you only harvest once a year, so this is continuous."(October, 2022).

Cooperative Farmer 6 stated: "I never grew up farming, I only joined the cooperative after I had lost my job in the firms in Matsapha." (September 2023).

A study in Nigeria found that women join cooperatives due to their small size of farms (Awotide et al, 2015) in Kenya, it was found that women were more likely to join a cooperative if they owned land (Inguita and Sumelius, 2022), and in Ethiopia, a study revealed that women who are members of a cooperative are more likely to be the heads of their homesteads (Woldu et al, 2013). These studies did not correlate with the findings of this study. Although there are diverse reasons driving women farmers to join a cooperative society, a sense of security that cooperatives give farmers was another finding that came out of the study which corresponds with the work of Balgah

(2019) who found that in Rwanda an older farmer is probably going to become a member of a cooperative in order to guarantee a market or for financial security in the old life. Understanding why the cooperative members joined the cooperative, I felt was important for the study because they all joined it to make money, and to make money one needs to be able to market oneself which in essence is how the farmers stood to make money.

Below I discuss why non-coop farmers do not join cooperatives.

Why Non-Coop Farmers Do not Join Cooperatives

According to the findings in this study, some of the farmers had started in cooperatives and later withdrew, seeing there was no progress. Others, preferred to work on their own rather than in a group so as to avoid quarrels and dominating individuals. This finding was in accordance with Chatzitheodoridis et al (2016).

Non-Coop Farmer 5 stated "I don't like the idea of being a member in a cooperative, there are a lot of disagreements and stabbing one another in the back, gossip. (October 2022)

Non-Coop Farmer 6 stated "I was once part of a cooperative some 20-odd years ago and I left the cooperative. In my garden, the onus is on me, if I don't care for my vegetables, I won't get anything. Yet in a cooperative, there is an expectation that someone else should go and tend to the plants and no one ends up going. Right now I need to go back to my field and garden to water my vegetables and my trees and chase birds away, this is all on me."(September 2023).

Agricultural cooperatives are guided by their constitutions and each cooperative may have a way of doing things, for instance taking turns in minding the plots where some have the responsibility of watering, others weeding, and this is what non-coop farmer is referring to. This study established that sunset cooperative does not work in that fashion because each farmer has their own plot which they are responsible for, in their absence they can ask a fellow member to check on their plot or hire someone to do it.

Non-Coop Farmer 8 related: "There are many cooperatives, and looking at the neighbouring smallholding next to mine, that is a cooperative but as you can see they haven't planted anything. Cooperatives are big on talking and they don't do the work." (September 2023)

Non-Coop farmer 8 above expressed the poor work ethic that some cooperatives have, and this did not resonate with her, which explains why she is not part of any cooperative. One member felt intimidated at the thought of joining a cooperative without land since some cooperatives needed prospective members to have land.

Non-Coop farmer 2: "I can't join a cooperative because I don't have enough land and I am of the opinion that they only accept members in their vicinity." (October 2022)

The statement above by Non-Cooperative Farmer 2 has been found in other studies by Abate et al (2014), and Baden and Pionetti (2011) as a factor that discourages women farmers from joining cooperatives. Another farmer wanted to join a cooperative but she had been caring for her chronically ill husband and could not leave the homestead.

Non-coop *Farmer 7 related: "I have never joined cooperatives because my husband is sickly, I need to be close to home, and joining a cooperative takes me away from home. I don't have anyone to assist with my husband. Joining a cooperative would be of great help to me." (September 2023)*

Some cooperatives under the Ludzeludze constituency require members or those prospective members to own land in order to become members which is what Abate et al, (2014), Inguita and Sumelius, (2022) allude to. Even though non-coop farmer 7 has access to land, the cooperative closer to her would give her a plot if she were to become a member, just like the members of Sunset Cooperative. This would then cause her to work away from home, and attend weekly meetings that cooperatives hold, leaving her husband unattended, which was not an option for her.

The statement above highlights the purpose of cooperatives that the ILO (n.d) in the literature highlights, that cooperatives are an excellent means of promoting social inclusion including economic empowerment of their members. The findings show that some of the non-coop farmers had previously joined cooperatives but later withdrew their memberships because cooperatives proved to be holding them back and less productive. For other respondents, cooperatives simply never appealed to them due to group dynamics. However, the findings also show that for some farmers cooperatives work for them, and are still appealing to others taking from the long-standing members of Sunset Cooperative Society and the newly joined members.

Having established the reasons that lead smallholder farmers to join a cooperative and not join a cooperative, below I discuss the findings on cooperative and non-coop farmers' choice of markets.

Choice of Markets

Cooperative Farmers and Choice of Markets

Most of the respondents in this study depend on the informal market, which includes the community, the school feeding programme and street hawkers. Out of the 6 respondents, one cooperative farmer also sold to the formal market, specifically to Shoprite Supermarket. Two of the members of the cooperative have had contracts with NAMBoard.

Below I discuss non-coop farmers' market choices and compare the two categories.

Non-Coop Farmers' Choice of Markets

Out of the eight non-coop farmers' interviewed, two of the respondents did not seek the market, one of them had no interest and the other did not have sufficient land to try and sell a surplus. Compared to the cooperative farmers, there seemed to be a diversity of markets with non-coop farmers. Three of the non-coop farmers supplied the formal market being Pick n Pay, SPAR and Boxer Supermarket in Manzini and Matsapha. The remaining three respondents supplied the informal market being a local primary school, stall markets and the community. The findings show that there is success for farmers outside of cooperatives in accessing the formal market compared to cooperative farmers. The findings also show that some of the farmers' choice of markets is influenced by the role of the state and NGOs as they support the school feeding programmes which will be discussed later in the chapter. Below I continue with discussing findings on the farmers' both in and outside cooperatives and their choice of markets, with a focus on formal markets. I begin by looking at the government of Eswatini's role in helping cooperative farmers, which will be followed by a discussion of cooperatives and retailers and then compare them to non-coop farmers and retailers.

The Government's Role in Helping Cooperative Farmers Access the Market

The government of Eswatini promotes and supports cooperatives, the government does this by making registration for a cooperative relatively easy with a minimum of 7 -10 people registering as a cooperative and a registration fee costing only E110,00[2]. Once registered the members go for training at CODEC which I refer to in the literature (Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade, 2017). The state acknowledged that it was important for cooperatives to have access to markets, and yet cooperatives were experiencing challenges. Accessing markets for farmers is crucial, a well-established market for farmers makes a massive difference in their livelihood and the time and effort spent in their fields means it does not go to waste. In the literature, Forsey (2022) explains how marketing an important dimension of successful farming is in that its ultimate goal is to establish brand loyalty and boost sales, and yet for some of the farmers interviewed, this was

[2] 1 Lilangeni (emalangeni) is equivalent to 1 South African rand

not easily accomplished. The ILO (2017) explained that small-scale farmers struggle with accessing markets.

Given the support that the government gives cooperatives, markets have been one area where it has not been successful in helping cooperatives. The government is addressing this challenge by way of using what they refer to as the APEX bodies whose functions include "to provide, organize and supervise central services such as joint supply of inputs, raw materials or implements, access to technical services and loans, joint marketing of produce and joint utilization any other services and installations that may be necessary to help the officers and members of their member cooperatives in achieving their objectives." (Government of Eswatini, P: 41). The apex bodies include the savings and credit cooperatives (SASCO), multi-purpose cooperatives where agricultural cooperatives fall under, and Sneaker which focuses on the youth.

The Government official stated: "Cooperatives are faced with challenges, especially when it comes to markets. As a department, we were trying to drive ESWAMCU to drive the farmer's agricultural produce and take the place of NAMBoard because the farmer can't tell NAMBoard for instance how much a cabbage is, instead they will hear from NAMBoard how much it is. But if the Apex body was influential, such decisions would be decided by members." (October 2022)

The union is active in other regions of the country in assisting cooperatives access markets and Taiwan has been seen as a willing country in the assistance. Union Representative stated that:

"There is a women's cooperative in the Hhohho region and they focus on guava trees, they got the seedlings from Taiwan and they sell the guava fruit to Taiwan."(October 2022)

It is important to note that cooperatives need to join the Union in order to have access to the benefits and Sunset Cooperative is not registered with the union. Having established that the government does not support cooperatives in accessing the formal market, neither does the state and NGOs support non-coop farmers, below I discuss cooperatives and retailers as a choice of market and then discuss non-cooperatives and retailers, and compare the two categories.

Cooperatives and Retailers

Out of the 6 cooperative farmers interviewed, one farmer had gone the formal market route, this farmer sells her produce to Shoprite in the town of Manzini. For farmers to go into the formal market is not easy due to there being a substantial number of farmers trying to get into that market. The formal market seems to be a better option for those farmers who are willing to work hard and consistently. The study revealed that some farmers are unable to put in the work which will require added resources in order to fulfil retail orders (see Schalkwyk et al, 2012, The ILO 2017, Ferris et al 2014).

Cooperative farmer 1: "I don't work hard enough to supply the formal market."

Since produce sold by retailers has to be of a certain standard, some farmers cannot produce yields of those standards and some lack the resources to be able to penetrate the retail sector. Retailers place large orders with the farmers, but there is a lack of consistency on the part of the retailers with placing repeat orders with farmers. This could be due to the large number of farmers hoping to get into that market.

Cooperative Farmer 6: "Sometimes retailers will request about 150 cabbages from each farmer, but they are not consistent, sometimes they don't call me. There are no guarantees in the market and farmers make a loss. For some, they have resorted to bribing retailers just so that they can take their produce." (September 2023)

Even though this particular cooperative farmer sells to retailers, the lack of consistency on the part of the retailers is unsettling for the farmer because if the produce does not go into the formal market, the food goes to waste. The study reveals that this cooperative society does not have support from the government and external donors to help access the market as a study in Malawi (Baden and Pionetti, 2012) shows how the support of the state and donors helps cooperatives access the market.

Non-Cooperative Farmers and Retailers

The study revealed that non-coop farmers who sold to the formal market were retailers which include Shoprite, Pick 'n Pay, Spar, Boxer Supermarket, and wholesalers in general. The retailers they focused on were in the Manzini region as this is in close proximity to them. Out of the eight respondents, three of the farmers focused on selling their produce not only to the formal market

Figure 2: Non-Coop Farmer supplying Pick n Pay (**Source:** Author, September 2023. Fieldwork photos)

but also to informal markets. They sold in the informal market because they did not have a guarantee that they would be able to sell all their stock to the retailers.

Non-Coop Farmer 3: "I supply a number a couple of retailers in Manzini and Matsapha. They call and tell me how much stock they need of cabbages or lettuce. I supply SPAR and Pick n Pay and wholesalers in general." (October 2022)

Non-Coop Farmer 4: "Once my vegetables are ready, I hire a van to deliver my produce to Boxer Supermarket and SPAR. The vegetable I usually grow is cabbage." (October 2022)

Non-Coop Farmer 8: "Once my vegetables are ready, this is where I encounter challenges. Sometimes my vegetables don't get harvested because we don't have a market. What contributes to this is that most of us plant the same vegetables at the same time in the same geographical area. It is usually by chance that I sell all my vegetables. I usually take my produce to the marketplace in town to sell it to retail shops. I have been working with retailers for a while now, so sometimes they call me and tell me what they need delivered. I have worked with Pick n Pay for a number of years now. " (September 2023)

The study shows that some of the challenges encountered by cooperative farmers and non-coop farmers in accessing the formal market are similar, as there is no guarantee that their produce will be taken by retailers, regardless of the years a farmer has been in cooperation with a retailer as is the case with non-coop farmer 8. Another contributing factor could be that farmers have quasi-formal contracts with retailers.

Non-coop farmer3 stated: "I have never signed a contract with any of the retailers I supply, they just put down my name and contact number, and that is how I am registered with the retailer and they tell me that they will contact me, which they eventually do." (October 2022)

This was seemingly the common practice as all the farmers supplying retailers related the same procedure. There is no legally binding agreement between retailers and farmers, which may explain why retailers do not order consistently from the same farmers.

The findings show that when accessing markets, farmers outside of cooperatives seemed more prompt in taking advantage of the opportunities available to them in the market that seemingly those in cooperatives do not, like applying to become suppliers to retailers. Supplying the formal market requires one to be constantly working hard in order to supply vegetables that are consistent with the same standards of quality that are expected by retailers. Some cooperative farmers are not able to maintain that consistency due to the challenges of accessing credit as mentioned earlier. Recall that Cooperative Farmer 1 stated,

"I don't supply retailers because I don't work that hard." (September 2023)

Meaning she is not always working on her plot. The findings of the study revealed that farmers outside of cooperatives, some of them were either in the fields planting and watering their vegetables, and others were getting ready to go back after having taken a break. The farmers that supplied retailers with their produce which was mainly cabbage, spinach, and lettuce, claimed to be constantly working on their fields or hired help. At the Sunset Cooperative Society, some members also hired people to work on their plots when they were unable to go or asked one of their colleagues to check on their plot which usually involves watering their vegetables. Another finding that is interesting to note is that Cooperative Farmer 6 was not consistently supplying at Shoprite, it was dependent on whether they called her or not, but Non-Cooperative Farmers 1, 2, and 8 seemed to be consistently supplying retailers and they have been doing so for years. The procedure that is followed when applying to become a supplier which is seemingly a quasi-formal/ or informal process does not give farmers confidence in the system. Farmers register their names and numbers, state in which season they will be supplying, what vegetables, and the quantity. Given that there is a large number of farmers who want to supply retailers, it is the only market that seems to be consistent that farmers are dependent on since it pays reasonably, farmers have to apply early. The government does not seem to show any support for both the farmers in and out of cooperatives in securing contracts with retailers, the same goes for NGOs.

Below I discuss farmers in and outside cooperatives and their experiences in accessing the informal market, I will compare the two categories of farmers in relation to support received or not from the state and NGOs. Firstly, I will give a background on the role of the state in collaboration with NGOs for farmers to access the informal market, in particular local primary schools.

Role of Government and International Organizations in helping Cooperative Farmers Access the Informal market

In the year 2022, three international organizations signed a memorandum of agreement to help women farmers in Eswatini increase their supply of local products for a school feeding initiative. The three organizations were the World Food Programme (WFP) Eswatini, the Centre of Financial Inclusion, and the COMESA Federation of Women in Business (COMFWB) (Chibomba, 2022). These three organizations committed to working together to increase the capacity of women farmer groups to serve as local produce suppliers for the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme. This will be accomplished by enhancing business and financial ability, registering women's groups in cooperatives, and implementing climate-smart agriculture and precision farming technology to boost agricultural productivity. While CFI will take care of the connections to the markets, COMFWB will be in charge of organizing the farmers into cooperatives. The WFP is in charge of connecting women farmers' cooperatives and providing training for them. The organization will also help the growth of horticulture's value chain and the availability of suitable agricultural inputs (Chibomba, 2022).

<u>Cooperatives and Informal Markets</u>

The findings in this study established that the farmers in a cooperative do not always work together in matters of marketing. They individually source their market, be it in the informal market or formal market whereas scholars have stated that cooperatives are important in accessing markets

(Baden and Pionetti 2011). This has been demonstrated by a cooperative in Armenia of milk farmers. A study by Hovhannisyan et al (2004) found that the cooperative in Armenia provided more consistent quantities and high-quality of milk. In this study, most of the farmers in a cooperative leaned towards informal markets, and for others, it was a bit of both since they had to find a way to move their produce and make sales although they are not always successful in that regard.

Since some of the cooperative members cannot afford to have a contract with NAMBoard because they are not in a position to fulfil that obligation, due to a lack of resources they resort to the informal market. Even though the informal market is easier for the farmers to navigate due to no stringent standards unlike the formal sector, they are not always successful at selling their produce. There was a school feeding programme that Sunset Cooperative Society was engaged in and it gave members a reliable and consistent market for a while.

Cooperative farmer 6: "We used to supply a local primary school, Ecinisweni Primary, and this programme was funded by FAO. Every week we would deliver to the primary school and get paid monthly, but unfortunately, the government stopped the programme in 2022, we don't know why. They said they would let us know when to resume." (September 2023)

The farmers were not aware of the reasons that led to the pause by the government, but for them, it was a setback because when the program was stopped they had already planted vegetables like onions, tomatoes, spinach, and cabbage thinking that it was going to the school. The farmers shared some information on what they got paid for some of the vegetables.

Cooperative farmer 6 said: "We deliver 13 cabbages every week and each cabbage was sold at E11, 00, and this was a consistent market." (September 2023)

Cooperative Farmer 1 felt that at times they were being cheated, she said: *"At first a cabbage cost E13, 00 then it changed and we were paid E11, 00, then we were told that they will pay us E5, 00 for a cabbage. Then we don't see the profit, it is so frustrating." (October 2022)*

The farmers were paid at the end of the month, each time a farmer made a delivery to the school it would be recorded and then the farmers would divide the money among themselves according to what each individual delivered, the money never went into the cooperatives account.

In the literature, Chibomba (2022) draws on a number of organizations coming together to support cooperatives so that they can supply government primary schools with vegetables to supplement the children's diet. Such an initiative did support members at Sunset Cooperative Society, even though it was not consistent. During my first visit to the cooperative plot the farmers showed me some cabbages that had died because once they were ready for harvest, they struggled to sell them. This finding is in line with the study conducted in the City of Tshwane that an agriculture cooperative struggled to access ready markets before harvest and the lack of transport facilities hindered them even more in accessing the market (Shava and Hofisi 2019). They depended on the community to come and support them, but for them to really make money with their produce to get to town and sell to the bigger markets. The findings in this study show that the farmers depend on word of mouth when their produce is ready and by sending street hawkers that they know text messages. Most of the members do not own cars, which makes it difficult for them to move their produce.

Cooperative Farmer 4 stated: "When we are ready to harvest maize, for instance, we physically go to markets in town to advertise our maize or make phone calls to inform people." (October 2022)

Cooperative Farmer 2: "Since we do not have access to the market, sometimes we carry our produce on our heads walking around, selling it." (October 2022)

Given how times have changed more farmers fighting for a piece of the market, most of the cooperative farmers that I interviewed are still relying on the way they did things when they were starting out as a cooperative.

Below I discuss the role of the state and international organizations in relation to non-coop farmers in accessing the informal market which is the school feeding programme, this will be followed by the farmers' experiences in the informal market and finally, I will compare the two categories.

The Role of the Government/ International Organizations with Non-coop Farmers

The government of Eswatini has played a pivotal role in some instances partnering with international organizations like FAO and Taiwan- Africa Vegetable Initiative (TAVI) in opening up a market for farmers in the primary schools of Eswatini. This initiative helps farmers stay afloat, being given a consistent market, but this initiative provides children with the nutrition they need for their growing bodies and brains. The Taiwan-Africa Vegetable Initiative (TAVI), a three-year project to conserve and use African vegetable biodiversity to address malnutrition by increasing the production and consumption of nutritious vegetables in Eswatini, Tanzania, Madagascar, and Benin, was started by the international nonprofit agricultural research institute World Vegetable Center (Worldveg), which has its headquarters in Shanhua, Taiwan (World Veg Center, 2021). In Sub-Saharan Africa, there is a triple burden of malnutrition: nearly half of all women of reproductive age suffer from anaemia, 30 per cent of children under five are stunted, and 28 per cent of adults are overweight or obese. Healthy meals are especially needed in Eswatini since more than one-third of its people are under the age of 14, and it has the 12th lowest life expectancy in the world (World Veg Center, 2021). The Eswatini government responded by enacting a nationwide school feeding plan and a zero-hunger strategy to enhance nutrition. In order to diversify meals at home and in schools, TAVI will assist this project by increasing the availability of fresh, nutrient-dense African vegetables. When TAVI was launched, it was indicated that TAVI had field-tested initiatives in schools and home gardens, as well as links with champion farmers, to provide schools with nutrient-dense African vegetables that might improve the diets of children and families (World Veg Center, 2021).

Non-Coop Farmers and Informal Markets

The findings in this study established that only one respondent out of the eight that were interviewed was consistent with providing African vegetables to one of the local primary schools. She would on occasion rope in other farmers if they had a shortage in supply and other farmers she knew of had produce, which she did with Non-Coop farmer 7 who is her neighbour.

Non-Coop Farmer 6: "I was approached by TAVI to get involved in this school feeding programme. Since I consistently attend farmers' workshops and road shows, I was spotted as a hard worker and a regular and was given the responsibility to plant indigenous vegetables like Ethiopian mustard, jute mellow, African eggplant, and amaranth madeira. All these vegetables depending on the season, I deliver every Monday to one of the local primary schools and I get paid by TAVI, if I don't deliver I don't get paid. This programme teaches that even if the children have rice or pap with beans it must always be accompanied by green vegetables, ensuring the children eat a balanced diet. The primary school that is supplied with these vegetables is near the high school, the high school students then ask for the food that the primary pupils have since they mostly get served rice and beans. Recently we proposed for this programme to be introduced in high schools." (September 2023)

Figure 3: Amaranth Madeira grown by Non-Coop Farmer 6 (**source:** Author, September 2023. Fieldwork photos)

This demonstrates the passion that farmers have, and it is important that they are given the support that they would need if the programme were to be extended to high schools. The support that farmers receive is the seedlings and knowledge about how to care for their crops when they start noticing bugs. For Non-Cooperative Farmer 6, she was encouraged to use natural organic compost or tomato and garlic mixture to get rid of these insects. She was proud of the quality of vegetables she got to put out without using hazardous chemical fertilizers.

Out of the eight Non-Coop Farmers interviewed, six of them supplied the informal market, outside of the school feeding programme. Even though some of them supplied retailers, they also supplied the informal market.

Non-Coop Farmer 3 stated: "Outside of the retailers that I supply, street hawkers also buy in bulk from me as well as the community." (October 2022)

Non-Coop farmer 5 stated: "Mostly I sell maize and sweet potatoes, by the time my produce is ready for harvest, I already have my customers lined up. I sell my produce to hawkers who buy at wholesale prices and community members also support me. I usually deliver the produce myself to the hawkers." (October 2022)

The study's outcome demonstrates that the informal market was the preferred market of choice for all the farmers both in and out of cooperatives who chose to sell their produce. The informal market included vegetable markets in Manzini, street hawkers, traders, a local primary school, and individuals. The findings also show that the state in collaboration with NGOs made an effort to open up a market for farmers both in and out of cooperatives with the school feeding programme. The difference is that the cooperatives supplied the school with common vegetables like spinach, onion and potatoes, whereas the Non-Coop farmer supplied a local primary school indigenous vegetables. Outside of the school feeding programme, farmers do not have any form of support from the state and NGOs.

Below I discuss the findings on farmers both in and outside cooperatives and their experiences with NAMBoard, I will first discuss cooperatives and NAMBoard followed by non-coop farmers and NAMBoard and compare the experiences of the two categories.

NAMBoard

<u>Cooperatives and NAMBoard</u>

Some of the farmers in the cooperative work closely with NAMBoard, but some not so much. Recall from the literature that NAMBoard is the government initiative that is charged with facilitating markets for both smallholders in and outside of cooperatives (NamBoard, n.d). Working with NAMBoard is one of the ways that farmers are certain that they will be able to sell their produce.

Cooperative Farmer 1 stated: "We work closely with NamBoard, once we have harvested, we sell our produce to NamBoard, and they sell it on our behalf. When we work in cooperation with NamBoard we see the profit unlike when we sell to hawkers." (October 2022).

Out of the 6 women farmers in cooperatives interviewed, accessing markets was not easy. Markets proved to be a big challenge for the farmers given that they toil the soil for hours daily and they are not certain where their produce will end up and at times it ends up dying on their plots. Cooperative Farmer 1 was the only farmer interviewed who seemed to endorse the efforts of NAMBoard and was reaping the benefits of having had a contract with NamBoard. Having a contract with NamBoard guarantees that all the produce will be sold. One of the deterring factors for farmers to have a contract with NAMBoard is that NAMBoard buys their vegetables below market price.

Cooperative Farmer 6: "The thing about NAMBoard is that if they do buy from us, it's usually at a lower rate compared to the going price in the market, which has not been good for us farmers because we all grow the same vegetables, and if the prices are different that affects us." (September 2023)

The cooperative does discuss the pricing of their various vegetables, but since they own individual plots, the money made from the produce they sell does not go to the cooperative, but instead to the individual. The findings show that the farmers are disinterested in having contracts with NAMBoard taking from the remarks of Cooperative Farmer 6 and the number of members not in contract with the marketing Board. A study in Eswatini in the Hhohho region found that access to contract markets like NAMBoard was low and a good number of smallholder farmers targeted the traditional market (Simelane et al, 2019) and it was attributed to a lack of knowledge.

Non-coop Farmers and NAMBoard

The study established that both the farmers outside of a cooperative and those in a cooperative had to find their own markets. Some of the challenges are shared across the board, like the challenges some face with signing a contract with NAMBoard. NAMBoard also offers its services to smallholder farmers outside a cooperative, but none of the non-coop farmers had worked with NAMBoard.

Non-Coop Farmer 8 stated: "NAMBoard buys at a lesser fee from us farmers in smallholdings, so I try to avoid NAMBoard. I have not signed a contract with NAMBoard, and I am skeptical I will not get paid what I deserve." (September 2023)

Non-Coop Farmer 6 stated: NAMBoard cheats us. They do not pay us the market value, that's why I have never had a contract with NAMBoard." (September 2023)

The farmers in both categories in the study seemingly shared similar concerns when it came to signing a contract with NAMBoard and that is not getting paid enough money or the market value for their produce. This finding demonstrates that the state does not support farmers both in and outside of cooperatives in the Ludzeludze constituency in securing a market with NAMBoard which could potentially be a viable one seeing as NAMBoard buys all the vegetables from a farmer that has a contract with them, this in turn would curb the challenges that cooperative farmers and farmers outside of cooperatives face post-harvest.

Below I discuss the findings on the dissemination of information between the two categories of farmers in relation to accessing markets and compare the two categories

Dissemination of Market Information to Farmers In and Outside of a Cooperative

The findings show that the cooperative farmers planted the same vegetables and the common ones were cabbages, spinach, and lettuce. A few of the members had different vegetables such as butternut, beetroot, cayenne, and garlic. Some of these vegetables were for NAMBoard. When I inquired about why they don't plant fruits like strawberries and herbs, the respondents were despondent in their response.

Cooperative Farmer 4: "We were encouraged to plant different fruits like strawberries, but the birds became our nemesis and we haven't tried planting things like herbs because we are not used to them and maybe if we learned that people want them, then maybe we would grow them."(October 2022)

This response is telling that not much information about what the market is saying it needs is getting to smallholder farmers which contributes to farmers not growing a variety of plants but also it also means that consumers are probably paying a high price for certain commodities that could be sourced locally but are not. This finding is in agreement with the work of Schalkwyk et al (2012) alluding to how a lack of marketing information, in a sense stagnates the farmers because they are unaware of what is needed in the market. This also raises the question if extension officers have this kind of information since they are the ones with the responsibility to provide farmers in and outside cooperatives with information. This would not be the only challenge for the consumer, but if most of the farmers are planting the same vegetables around the same time, means that there would be a shortage of certain vegetables at some point making it expensive for the consumer once again. The Union Representative voiced his opinion on the matter and the plans they have as a union to combat this challenge.

Union representative stated: "The union wants to embark on a campaign whereby we scout for farmers who have land and water to suggest to them what they should plant in the first 2 months *of the year, and then move to the next farmers say from March to May and they plant the same vegetable, in this way there won't be a vacuum in the market. "October 2022)*

This response from the union partially made sense, I could see how the vacuum issue could be potentially addressed, but on the other hand, it was concerning that they were not planning to approach different cooperatives and have them focus on staggering the planting of vegetables. Sunset Cooperative Society had previously gone through the challenges of sourcing water, but during my fieldwork, I learned that they had secured a reliable source of water from Manzimnyama through the support of Eswatini Water and Agricultural Development (ESWADE) which means they could be an ideal candidate for the union's trial, but the uncertainty would lie in securing a market for the farmers.

Knowledge dissemination is not just a problem at the administration level, but among farmers, there is no sharing of information. These sentiments were shared by cooperative members and the union representative.

Cooperative farmer 6: "Some of the cooperative members supply the formal market but they do not share this information with other members and tell others how to go through the process of applying and that is how we lose our produce and it goes to waste."(September 2023)

Union representative stated: "Farmers are not willing to share with their colleagues how to access the market for those who have succeeded, not referring one another. Farmers are jealous and don't share this information."(October 2022)

Interestingly, non-coop farmers were willing to share information with other farmers. When a farmer cannot fulfil a supplier commitment in instances where their produce is not ready, they contact other farmers to step in on their behalf.

Non-Coop Farmer 6 stated: "I used to be the only one in my area supplying one of the local primary schools, but I convinced the sponsor to recruit 4 more farmers. This has helped because if my vegetables are not ready I contact the other farmers and they deliver to the school. This way the children never go hungry and the farmer who delivers gets paid." (September 2023)

These farmers have a WhatsApp group where they constantly communicate and share knowledge, this is how non-cooperative Farmer 7 ended up supplying the school because she had an excess of vegetables and was able to make money. Initially, non-coop farmer 6 delivered her vegetables alone on Mondays to the school, but now there are two groups that deliver at the school on Mondays and Fridays.

Below I discuss transport challenges faced by farmers in and out of cooperatives when it comes to accessing the market.

Transport Challenges and Accessing the Market for Farmers in Cooperatives and Outside

The road in the Ludzeludze constituency is gravel, it is in poor condition more so in wet weather conditions getting around can be a challenge. Yet, farmers raised the challenge of transportation and how costly it was for them to move their produce from their farms to the buyers. Seemingly before COVID-19, farmers were getting by finding ways of hiring transport to move their produce. After COVID-19, some of the farmers are back to working and producing at the previous scale, the problem is hiring transport has become expensive for them due to the increase in the cost of fuel. Coming from the backdrop of COVID-19 and Russia's war in Ukraine, the cost of fuel and fertilizer has become expensive for farmers.

Non-Coop Farmer 3 stated: "Coming out of COVID-19 has brought some relief, but a new challenge that has sprung up, it is the high cost of petrol which has led to the rise in van hire costs which is now E500, 00, and the retailers would only pay us once all our produce has been sold. I ended up using my husband's private car which cost us E150,00 on petrol but since it's a small *car I'm unable to move 200 cabbages in one go. Having a form of transport is important, in this way as a farmer you are seen as reliable and consistent."(October 2022)*

This has crippled some of the farmers with struggling to move their produce, leading to a big financial loss. The issue of transport between the two categories of farmers was a burning issue for farmers outside of cooperatives.

Non-Coop farmer 8 stated: currently I am looking to buy a pre-owned bakkie since the one I have been using has recently broken down. I had just finished paying it off, and then this happened. I can't move my produce with ease, if I could just get an old bakkie I know I would be able to reach more people and make more money. If only the state could support us farmers in this area" (September 2023)

Besides the two non-coop farmers who had transport challenges, the other non-coop farmers who sold their produce did not experience transport challenges. The findings also show that cooperative farmers did have transport challenges since they physically carried their produce on their heads to sell, and yet striving to get a vehicle did not seem like a matter of urgency for them.

Having discussed the findings that show that the state and NGOs are not doing nearly enough to support farmers in a cooperative and farmers outside of a cooperative in markets, I move to discuss farmers both in and outside of cooperatives in accessing credit.

Access to Credit

In this section under access to credit, first, I highlight the various financial resources that are in place to assist farmers by the state and NGOs which are the microfinance and Regional Development Fund (RDF) which will be followed by the findings of both farmers in and outside of cooperatives in accessing credit and a comparison between the two categories. Access to credit is imperative to the study because it is what determines if farmers can penetrate the formal market. After all, it is dependent on whether they can afford to buy agricultural inputs.

Micro Finance

The Micro Finance Unit (MFU) was established in 2010 by the Ministry of Finance in Eswatini with the aim of facilitating the delivery of sustainable, efficient, and effective financial services; creating an environment that is conducive to and enhances business development in rural areas; establishing Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and business services in rural areas; and facilitating access to financial services for the unbanked, impoverished population living in rural areas (Finscope, 2011). The Eswatini Financial Service Regulatory Authority (FSRA), which oversees the non-bank financial services sector, regulates the country's thriving microfinance business, which has more than 100 institutions (Finscope, 2011). One of the many initiatives established by the Eswatini government is the Eswatini Development Finance Corporation (FINCORP) which was established in 1995. The main aim of FINCORP is to promote economic development in Emaswati by providing easily accessible financial services. Entrepreneurs on SNL and TDL can obtain financial support from FINCORP to establish new businesses and expand existing ones. The majority of agribusiness operations in FINCORP's loan portfolio are located in rural areas (Fincorp, n.d). This is an endeavor by the government to financially include all Emaswati. Eswatini is home to a sizable number of NGOs. There are three main micro finance in Eswatini; Sweet Micro Finance, Imbita Eswatini Women’s Finance Trust is a well-known organization that receives funding from donors and works to alleviate the paucity of financial services available to women in the area of loan provision (Finscope, 2011). The third one is the Inhlayelo Fund, with locations all over the country. Inhlanyelo Fund offers loans with an average size of E4, 500 [3](R4, 500) and a maximum loan amount of E25, 000, which is repaid over a maximum of 24 months. The majority of its loan portfolio is for agricultural purposes, and recipients are not obliged to have collateral (Myeni, 2018). In Eswatini, cooperatives play a crucial role in providing financial services to residents who save and borrow money from these organizations. The Co-operatives Society Act gives the Ministry of Commerce, Trade, and

[3] E1 =R1 (1 Lilangeni is equivalent to 1 South African Rand)

Industry the authority to regulate these institutions, and supporting the cooperative movement is considered one way of promoting financial inclusion among the poor (Finscope, 2011).

Regional Development Fund

The Regional Development Fund (RDF) is an initiative of the government of Eswatini that supports regional and rural development. The RDF is a grant program funded by the yearly government budget that gives local communities access to grant money for the construction of community infrastructure (Myeni, 2018). Infrastructure development, enhancements, service provision, and labour-intensive projects are among the key considerations. Additionally, the RDF offers grant money to a group with a minimum of ten members, that want to take part in income-generating activities like farming and agro-processing (Myeni, 2018). This grant is attractive to cooperatives, however, the study revealed that some of the requirements are a challenge for cooperatives. For instance one of the requirements is proving that the land they farm on is theirs, which in most cases is communal. Another requirement for eligibility is that the project must be financially viable and include a component for employment development (Eswatini Investment Promotion Authority, 2020).

The RDF falls under the Micro Projects Programme (MPP) initiative and operates semi-autonomously under the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. It aims to enhance access to rural and peri-urban infrastructure facilities, supporting SDG1's goal of eradicating poverty and improving livelihoods through community-driven projects (Mkhonta, 2023). The MPP also acts as an implementing agency for capital projects funded by several government ministries as well as RDF projects for the Ministry of Tinkhundla Administration and Development (MTAD) in an effort to further contribute to Eswatini's overall economic development (Mkhonta, 2023). Ntiwane (2021) asserts that the ultimate objective of the RDF project is to empower local communities to grow independently and sustainably using their own resources, human potential, and cultural and social values. The first thing that is noticeable with the RDF is that it does not serve individual interests but seeks to empower a group of individuals.

Cooperative farmers and Accessing Credit

The government of Eswatini along with the NGOs mentioned above have created mechanisms that will support smallholder farmers in Eswatini to fight poverty but also to contribute to the economic growth of the country. The study revealed that members of Sunset Cooperative Society do not access any of the financial resources that are made available by the state and local NGOs. The members revealed that they needed financial assistance but accessing the banks or borrowing from other cooperatives was not an option for them. Some of the financial challenges they encountered were affecting their chances of accessing markets or having contracts with NAMBoard as Cooperative Farmer 1 related.

"Currently some members have a contract with NAMBoard supplying butternut. Farmers are told what type of butternut seedling to buy and the fertilizers needed for that butternut. The problem emanates when farmers cannot afford to buy all the seedlings, manure, and fertilizers recommended by NAMBoard and then their produce does not end up being of high quality. Once the butternut has a crack or any kind of deformity, NAMBoard does not take it." (September 2023).

One of the challenges that deters some farmers is that if the produce is not of high quality, NAMBoard rejects that produce. Given that some farmers are financially challenged this explanation was acceptable, however, the union representative did not share the same sentiments.

The Union representative related that: "What leads to cooperatives not succeeding and producing food of poor quality is because they are so dependent on handouts, those who can produce good quality do so because they take short loans and are able to buy all the chemicals for farming. This way they can produce vegetables of high quality." (October 2022)

This claim by the Union representative could not be verified, all the respondents claimed to have purchased their seedlings and fertilizers. The findings show that farmers are scared and reluctant to secure loans from organizations and formal institutions. This finding was in accordance with a study conducted in Nigeria on a cocoa production, farmers never accessed loans through bank loans due to challenges of collateral (Nkang et al, 2009). In the case of Sunset Cooperative Society, it would be a challenge to get a loan considering that the cooperative does not own the land.

Cooperative Farmer 2: "We are not able to access credit but as a cooperative, we haven't been to financial institutions to ask for assistance. We use the finance we have as a cooperative since 1977."(October 2022)

Cooperative Farmer 3: "We have never gone to seek financial assistance from banks since they want collateral and as a cooperative, we do not have." (October 2022)

Government Official stated: "Cooperatives need credit but unfortunately it is difficult for them to get it. There is a stigma associated with it, I am not sure if the challenge comes when paying back the loan. Another contributing factor is insurance, for instance when a natural disaster strikes such as hail, or frost, the crops die, and it hinders farmers from paying back their loans. However, the government has been supporting farmers in the form of the RDF. Farmers get assistance through that fund and they don't pay back the money. Currently, we are sitting at almost 1000 cooperatives and a good number of them are registered to access the RDF, but to access the grant the state requires cooperatives to have 10 % of the amount that is needed. Some cooperatives have purchased trucks. For instance, if the cooperative wants E500,000 they must have E50,000 to run the operational costs." (October 2022)

The initiative by the state with the RDF is impressive, it encourages citizens to start cooperatives so that they can start projects that will empower Emaswati. The study revealed that even though the farmers praised the RDF initiative, they could not access the fund because they did not meet the requirements.

Cooperative Farmer 2: "We have been trying to get funds from the RDF but encountered challenges. When filling out the paperwork, there was a section about the cooperative business plan, we needed to attach three forms about markets and we couldn't apply because we did not *have the information they needed us to have. We did not meet the requirements; we needed the funds to purchase inputs." (October 2022).*

Cooperative Farmer 5: "RDF is simple when it is being discussed, but when going through the process it proves to be difficult. For instance when applying we have to prove that as a cooperative we own the land, even the water we use, if the Chiefdom doesn't issue a letter stating that as a cooperative we own the land or a letter that states that the water we use comes from which source, it becomes a stumbling block." (September 2023)

Taking from what the farmers shared, information may not be trickling down to the grassroots, and the assistance that cooperatives may not be within their immediate reach to support them with accessing funds as we will see in the findings discussion on Extension Officers in chapter 5.

<u>Non-Coop Farmers and Access to Credit</u>

Accessing credit is important for both farmers in and out of a cooperative, as it also determines their market reach, considering the quality of yields and as I have discussed the importance of transport. The findings reveal that non-coop farmers did not access financial institutions and NGOs that offer farmers financial assistance.

Non-Coop Farmer 5 stated: "I have never gone to the bank to loan money, I just make ends meet by selling my produce." (October 2022)

Non-Coop Farmer 8: "Most farmers at some stage need a cash boost, but it's hard to get supported in that regard. As a farmer, I have challenges such as collateral. In my case, the land I use for farming belongs to the chiefdom, so I don't have collateral. I haven't borrowed money from cooperatives and NGOs. When I need money, I just wait for the time when I am financially okay since months are not the same." (September 2023)

Non-coop farmer 3 and 6 also reiterated that they have not needed to borrow money for farming. These two farmers are retired teachers and they have access to money through their pensions and their active involvement in the market. The findings show that there is a lot of focus on making accessible finances for cooperatives in Eswatini considering the RDF which focuses on giving cooperatives finances they do not need to pay back, which unfortunately Sunset Cooperative Society has not benefited from it. The government of Eswatini and NGOs have set out to make credit accessible to farmers in rural areas, however, this study shows that none of the respondents either in a cooperative or out of a cooperative took advantage of this support afforded specifically to farmers.

Conclusion

This chapter depicts that support from the government of Eswatini and NGOs is not afforded to farmers in and out of a cooperative in every sector of the market. Farmers in and out of cooperatives in the Ludzeludze constituency do not receive any form of support in accessing the formal market, farmers who choose to partake in that category have to fend for themselves. However, the state and NGOs do support farmers in and out of a cooperative in opening up a market for them in local primary schools, and both the state and NGOs endeavor to make means possible for farmers to access financial assistance as it is imperative for farmers to access credit. The findings also show that the farmers in and out of a cooperative in Ludzeludze do not take up the financial opportunities afforded to them, most of them claimed not to have collateral, while some did not need to borrow money since they have a non-passive income. The next chapter is a continuation of discussing the support that farmers from Ludzeludze who are in and out of a cooperative receive from the state and NGOs, with a focus on social capital and how it plays a role.

Chapter 5: Social Capital

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the impact of social capital in assisting women farmers in and outside of a cooperative in accessing support from the state and NGOs. The findings reveal that bonding and linking social capital played a role in farmers receiving support which also cascaded down to members of the community benefiting from non-coop farmers and to Sunset cooperative members. The findings also reveal that low levels of social capital among farmers in and out of cooperatives demonstrate that it prevents both categories of farmers from receiving support from the state and NGOs. The support that the women farmers in and outside of a cooperative is dependent on how much social capital as a group and as individual farmers they have that determines if they will receive support from the state and NGOs and yet some of the farmers are not dependent on the support given by the state and NGOs. The chapter will first discuss the women's level of education both in and out of cooperatives under the Ludzeludze constituency with a focus on their socio-economic status and its impact on social capital. This will be succeeded by a discussion on extension officers and their role with farmers given social capital, which will then be followed by the farmers' ability to employ workers, family support, a discussion on the role of government and subsidies and finally how members of the community benefit when farmers have access to support. In every section a comparison between the two farmer categories will be made.

Educational Level

Educational level of Farmers in a Cooperative

The findings in this study reveal that all the respondents in this category of farmers never completed their formal education. Four out of the six farmers interviewed went on to lower secondary school but never completed their high schooling, and two out of the six farmers went as far as primary school. Fortunately, women farmers in a cooperative, do receive some form of training from the state upon joining or establishing a cooperative. For cooperative members, once they have formally registered the cooperative they undergo cooperative training at CODEC which the government of Eswatini sponsors. A policy statement by the government states that "The government of Eswatini realizes that education and training are pivotal to vibrant and successful co-operatives. The government shall therefore forge a cooperative education and training system to ensure that members, leaders, and staff co-operatives possess the requisite skills and competence for managing and directing the affairs of the co-operative." (Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade, 2017:18)

The Government Official stated: "Since most women farmers have not completed primary school or high school, the training they get is enough to help them run the day-to-day of cooperatives. They just need to be able to write the receipt book and payment voucher. We also have officers based in regions across the country and they continue with the training of cooperatives because we believe that training is continuous. We also have inspectors in the department and they help with the inspection of cooperatives ensuring that they record all money coming into the cooperative so that at the end of the year we have the information for auditing. The inspector also has the responsibility of training a member or members on record keeping." (October 2022)

This is one of the benefits that cooperatives receive from the state at no charge, to teach them the basics of running a cooperative as well as being part of a cooperative. The study also found that new members who join an already established cooperative will be trained by the old members, as some of them would have received additional training taking from the remarks above. For instance, when we look at cooperative farmer 6 who joined the cooperative in 2010 without any farming experience shows that some of the members assisted her.

Cooperative farmer 6 stated: "When I joined the cooperative back in 2010, I had never planted anything in my life. The members in this cooperative have been supportive, they taught me how to plant the different vegetables and taught me about how the cooperative is run. I have never thought of leaving this cooperative because of how we support one another." (September 2023)

The remarks by cooperative farmer 6 demonstrate the bonding social capital that exists within cooperatives. Bonding social capital among farmers promotes collaboration and connections amongst them, which in turn encourages the sharing of informal and experienced knowledge as well as agricultural labour and equipment (Cofre-Bravo et al, 2019, Burton et al. 2006). According to a Cofre-Bravo et al. (2019) study on fruit producers in Chile, peers contribute to the bonding of social capital by offering advice and assistance in resolving farming-related issues, this was in line with the findings of this study. Whatever training received by the cooperative from the government trickled down to new members who were never part of the initial training. And the role of the government demonstrates linking social capital. People who experience socioeconomic challenges can greatly benefit from this type of social capital, which helps them get by and establishes the norms and trust necessary for cooperative action (Claridge, 2018).

Educational Level for Non-coop Farmers

When it comes to women farmers outside of a cooperative in Ludzeludze, the findings show that three out of the eight respondents are retired professionals, two are retired teachers and one is a retired nurse. Two of the respondents made it to secondary school, one ended up in the foundation phase in grade two, and one respondent never received formal education.

The findings in the study show that most of the women in the study come from a similar socio-economic background, whereby they never completed primary and secondary school with one respondent outside of a cooperative having never attended school. With the exception of three respondents who are retired professionals. Even though the one respondent never attended formal education she did however receive informal education at Sebenta National Institute which offers adult education and literacy.

Non-Cooperative Farmer 4: "I never went to school, but I went to Sebenta where I was taught mathematics and siSwati, so I am able to do basic counting." (October 2023)

The findings show that the non-coop farmers did not receive any formal training compared to the cooperatives, however, there are usually trade fairs and workshops for farmers that are hosted by government and NGOs where farmers go and display their produce but also gain some knowledge.

Non-Coop Farmer 3 stated "I attend the workshops that are usually hosted by NGOs and I attend the trade fair which is usually held annually in the country, where farmers display their produce. There we get to be introduced to plants we are not familiar with, not only that but we are taught on their importance, and currently we are being taught about climate change and what adaptive strategies we can use and vegetables to plant. At times we are also given seedlings to plant to try out these plants". (October 2022)

The workshops are open to all farmers in the Kingdom, however, the findings in the study showed that not all farmers in both categories in Ludzeludze could attend these conferences. Some of the farmers both in and outside of a cooperative could not afford to attend because they lacked resources, and those in the cooperative depended on some of their colleagues to share the information they gained. Here we see the socio-economic aspect affecting some farmers.

The succeeding section will first give a short background on extension officers in Eswatini and will then proceed to discuss the findings of both farmers in and out of a cooperative when it comes to extension officers with a focus on social capital and how it impacts farmers on accessing support.

Extension officers

The mission of the Department of Agriculture and Extension services in Eswatini is to provide farmers with the necessary tools to guarantee higher agricultural productivity and output as well as raise the standard of life for households in the nation's rural and peri-urban areas (Ministry of Agriculture, 2011). In order to improve food security and the nutritional status of the Swazi people, the department is required to enable the country to expand food production and access to safe, wholesome food products, to encourage or assist farmers in meeting export demand by increasing yield and improving the quality of their produce, which would boost the nation's foreign exchange revenues (Ministry of Agriculture, 2011). Training for extension officers was funded by donors and according to Simelane et al (2019), the government of Eswatini terminated the training of Extension Officers when it ran out of external money and was unable to fund the project going forward. Even though the government appeared to be taking its whole focus away from the RDA programme where extension officers are based, RDAs continued to operate, albeit with decreasing efficacy. Following that, extension officers from World Vision and Red Cross took over the rural communities and they began to receive agricultural extension assistance from them (Simelane et al, 2019). The government of Eswatini does collaborate with extension officers from NGOs, because when there is training or knowledge sharing that farmers need, NGO extension officers use the RDAs premises and farmers come out in their numbers to these gatherings. Currently, there are only two extension officers from World Vision covering the Manzini region.

Cooperative Farmers and Extension Officers

Extension Officers are crucial in the works of farmers, be they farmers in cooperatives or smallholder farmers outside of cooperatives. The findings of this study show that extension officers are important, as previously mentioned before commencing on data collection, extension officers based at the RDA in Ludzeludze told me where I could locate some of the farmers in and outside of a cooperative, which shows how well they know them. The farmers are dependent on extension officers for information, and for them to try and address concerns that they have. The farmers do know the extension officers from RDA, the challenge is that they do not get to see their extension officers often enough to strengthen relations with them. The study established that government extension officers are not always readily available to visit farmers at the cooperative society, however, they do link farmers with extension officers from NGOs.

Cooperative Farmer 6 stated: "Upon joining the cooperative in 2010, I noticed that the cooperative had a few challenges. Outside of insufficient funds, I noticed that the older farmers did not have access to new or current knowledge that would develop them, which led me to question if farmers were taken seriously in the country. Since joining I have also noticed that extension officers make ad hoc visits to our cooperative. They tell us that they are faced with transport *challenges and can't come out to see farmers often. Extension officers tell us that the government is not in good financial standing hence their transport challenges. So we never know when they will come. However when they do come through they meet with members of the cooperative, usually we meet on Tuesdays. After their visits, we are left feeling hopeful with some of our concerns addressed and the extension officers having imparted some knowledge with the cooperative." (September 2023)*

The extension officers are there to share knowledge with farmers, for instance, if there is an outbreak of certain insects or worms they inform farmers on how to protect their crops from such infestations as well as services that are available to farmers. These meetings also give farmers a chance to ventilate their concerns, unfortunately, given the ad hoc visits from the extension officers, farmers are left feeling uncertain if their concerns will be addressed in a timely manner. The remarks by farmer 6 demonstrate that extension officers do take their role seriously, but due to matters beyond their control, they cannot make the expected visits to the farms. In Tanzania, a study by Mkuki and Msuya (2020) on the perceptions of extension officers, extension officers believed that their roles were critical to enhancing the effectiveness of the agricultural extension system, with the advisory function being considered the most crucial. On the other hand, farmers' low yields have been attributed to extension officers' failure to perform their duties. A study in Eswatini highlighted the challenges that are faced by extension officers that were reiterated by cooperative Farmer 6. Simelane et al (2019) found that the difficulties experienced by extension agents were a shortage of vehicles for visiting a large number of farmers and helping them with their needs, as well as a staffing shortage with a ratio of extension officers to farmers of 1:500.

The findings of the study revealed that extension officers from NGOs, specifically World Vision are linked with cooperative farmers, however, due to the challenges of group dynamics extension officer's follow-up to the cooperative is not consistent.

Cooperative Farmer 2. "World Vision extension officers occasionally assist us in our work and teach us how to grow indigenous plants. Sometimes we don't follow the directions; for example, a *plant may require watering a couple of days after planting, depending on the species. Sometimes we don't follow the latter's recommendations, which prevents the plants from growing. This attitude, I've discovered, deters the extension officials from visiting our plot because, in most cases, we wouldn't have followed the instructions". (October, 2022)*

With government extension officers not being available to see farmers as often as possible, this makes it difficult for the two extension officers to see most farmers, and it does not make it time-worthy for them to see a group of farmers who are not adhering to their advice. In this case, social capital would support farmers in absorbing technical knowledge and implementing new farming technology (Han et al. 2022), however, it demonstrates that trust levels are low between farmers and extension officers and it also shows that some of the members are not so keen on taking up or learning on some adaptation strategies meaning they will continue to stick to the common vegetables which were mostly planted at Sunset cooperative.

<u>Non-Coop Farmers and Extension Officers</u>

Extension officers in Eswatini also service smallholder farmers outside of a cooperative. The findings of the study found that some non-coop farmers are also visited by extension officers from NGOs, specifically from World Vision. This is consistent with research that Simelane et al. (2019) mentioned how NGOs' extension officers got involved and started providing agricultural extension services in rural areas when the Eswatini government shifted its focus away from RDAs, where extension officers are stationed, due to a lack of external funding for the extension officers' training programme. Out of the 8 non-coop farmers interviewed, only one non-coop farmer was using the services of an extension officer from World Vision. The findings show that there are very few extension officers available in the Manzini region, as it stands there are two extension officers from World Vision that cover the Manzini region, and the government extension officers are only accessible at the RDA. In previous years, FAO also had extension officers who worked with farmers in Ludzeludze.

Non-Cooperative Farmer 6 stated "A few years ago when I was still employed as a teacher, we were approached by FAO through the Ministry of Agriculture using RDA Ludzeludze, with an offer to give us fruit trees of our choice, to whoever had land and could fence their property and had access to water. Since I have access to land and water I took mango tree seedlings since the climate in Ludzeludze is the right one for growing mangos. At the time I was employed as a full-time teacher, so I could afford to fence my trees. FAO occasionally comes to my homestead to check on the trees and inform me on what I should use to spray on the trees, things like malasol which helps control the infestation of pests and yet it is not harmful to humans. FAO supports me by sharing knowledge and as a form of supervision of my trees. They do not take anything from me, but just give me knowledge on how best to take care of my trees. FAO also hosts workshops which I often attend, where I learned that I need to plant vegetables in between the mango trees." (September 2023)

The study found that the role of extension officers cannot be overlooked, even though the government of Eswatini is not doing enough when it comes to farmers and providing resources so that extension officers can be accessible to most farmers. Extension services have a major role in home farming adoption of innovation since they help provide the necessary education and information, according to a Malaysian study (Shibli et al, 2021). Kos et al (2023) allude to how social capital takes into account how social standing affects one's ability to obtain resources more easily through relationships with extension agents. Since non-coop farmer 6 was a teacher at the time, she had contacts and was easily accessible because not only was she known but she was a regular at the farmer's workshops making it easy for her to access information and support from FAO. The study also found that not many of the members in Sunset cooperative attended workshops and the trade fair, leading them to miss out on gaining new knowledge in their industry, but due to bonding social capital established in their cooperative, they accessed support through their co-members, which shows that the high levels of bonding social capital within Sunset cooperative.

Beginning of the chapter, the focus was on social capital that makes it possible for some of the farmers in both categories to receive support from the state and NGOs, directly and indirectly.

Below, I discuss findings on employment opportunities created by farmers through the support they receive from the state and NGOs.

Employment Creation

Employment Creation by Cooperative Farmers

This research established that the women in the co-operative in the Mbekelweni area which is under the Ludzeludze constituency are contributing to the eighth sustainable development goal which is to promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full productive work, and decent work for all (United Nations, n.d). Agricultural co-operatives account for 33% of the country's total workforce; statistics also show that co-operatives employ 494 people out of a population of 1 million, with 412 employed by the co-operative society and 82 by the government through the co-operative department in the Ministry of Commerce (ILO, n.d). This finding resonates with Poteyeva (2023) that there is a correlation between social capital levels and community employment levels. In the cooperative, not all farmers could afford to create employment, those who could employ someone to work on the plot could do so because they had alternative sources of income and were not solely dependent on the cooperative unlike the respondents of the study, where none of them were in a position to hire extra help.

Cooperative farmer 2 stated "Some of our members hire people to work on their plots. Some of them, unlike me, have other sources of income, some of them rare and sell indigenous chickens and freshly laid eggs from their homes, that way they can afford to pay someone to mind their plot in their absence. These members usually hire people from within the community." (October 2022)

Through workshops, discussions, and one-on-one visits, the Eswatini government provides practical and helpful knowledge to smallholder farmers engaged in chicken production on both SNL and TLD (Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini, 2023). Support from the state for these farmers makes it possible for them to create employment and expand. This finding also highlights the economic disparities between the cooperative members at Sunset Cooperative.

Employment Creation by Non-coop Farmers

Non-cooperative farmers who were commercializing their produce employed a number of people, the people whom they employed were people within their areas, some of the farmers who hired people never received any support from the state and NGOs, like non-coop farmer 1 who stated that

"I don't get any form of support from the state or NGOs, but I am still able to hire people. Since our plot is big, when I need to hire help, I usually hire about 14 people, especially if I haven't used herbicides to control the weeds. However, in the event I use the herbicides, I don't employ that many people. I will also hire people during harvest time." (October 2022)

Non-coop farmer 1 is a retired teacher, her pension encompassed with the revenue from the sales she makes from her vegetables, and her husband's support places her in a position to be able to hire. Not all non-coop farmers do not receive support. Non-coop farmer 6 receives support from an NGO which enables her to hire some people to work in her fields.

Non-coop farmer 6 stated "The income I make from TAVI really goes a long way, I use that money to hire the needed help. However, when I am not paid on time by TAVI it does cause some friction between me and my employees. Given that I hire about 6 young men from my area they know that they will eventually get paid since I have worked with them for some time now and they know me." (September 2023)

The findings suggest that bonding social capital is high among the farmers both in and out of a cooperative and within their communities since there is a reliance on family members and the community. The findings also show that despite the endeavours made by the state and NGOs not many cooperative farmers can access their services due to their socio-economic statuses which negatively impacts their linking social capital, which ultimately affects farmers' quality of produce and access to markets. In the case of non-coop farmers, outside of one respondent who used an international organization, the other farmers did not.

The next section moves to discusses how family support helps farmers access support if at all from the state and NGOs

Family Support

Family Support for Cooperative Farmers

The findings of this study highlighted the important role that family members play in the lives of farmers in cooperatives. Since finances are a challenge with Sunset Cooperative Society, some respondents stated that they need financial assistance, but they lack the means to apply since they do not meet the requirements when applying for a bank loan and for the RDF as discussed in chapter four. Members have resorted to seeking assistance from family members. The support received through family members did not seem to assist farmers in reaching out to the state or organizations for assistance, however the assistance from family did not just benefit an individual, but the cooperative.

Cooperative Farmer 3 "There is a lack of security here on our plot. Our vegetables were getting stolen. Our fence was old and damaged. One of our members asked his son if he could assist with purchasing a fence for the cooperative. Luckily for us, he did." (October 2022)

Cooperative Farmer 2 "I sometimes have to ask my children to assist me when I need to purchase manure. Sometimes I struggle." (October 2022)

The findings show that Sunset Cooperative is inward-looking, resulting in them not accessing resources, this finding suggests that the cooperative farmers have high bonding social capital. This is one of the challenges of bonding social capital, the FAO (2020) alludes to the limited scope of collective activity that focuses solely on fostering bonds between members prevents small-scale farmers from having access to all the resources necessary to ensure their full economic inclusion.

Family Support for Non-Coop Farmers

The respondents who are outside of a cooperative were relatively successful in their farming, but what stood out were the three farmers who had previous professional careers and did not seem to seek any form of support outside of their families. Coming from the middle class, these farmers had a certain level of advantage which allowed them to access resources be they material or human because for these farmers when answering the question posed to them about what kind of support from the state they needed. They interestingly responded similarly, by trying to think of what they needed outside of what they could do for themselves, and it turned out that they did not feel they needed any support from the government or NGOs, however, recall that non-coop farmer 6 did use the services of an international organization, and was likely responding to the question in relation to support from the state.

Non-Cooperative Farmer 1 said, "I don't receive any form of support and I don't need any from the state, my sons support me and I use my pension."(October 2022)

Non-Cooperative Farmer 3 said, "Most of us farmers are not really supported by anyone, we fund ourselves unlike in South Africa where they are given support in times of drought."

Non-Cooperative Farmer 6 said, "I don't get support from the government not even from my husband, I do everything myself. My husband simply does not get involved, I have been farming for a long time now and I think he would be a distraction." (October 2022)

These three farmers were adamant that they did not need support from outside but what was clear was that their families did play supportive roles in their endeavor as smallholder farmers commercializing their produce. Non-Cooperative Farmer 1 has the support of her sons, even though they do not live with her, but should she need them to help regarding her farming, they are in a position to assist her. Non-Cooperative Farmer 6 used to go to the fields with her children when they were younger, she used to farm for subsistence and then sell the surplus. Each of her children had a small plot they would manage after school and they would be responsible for watering and weeding. She taught her children at a young age the skill of agricultural farming and where food came from.

"The reason I taught my children this skill is that in the event I were to die they wouldn't suffer, and wouldn't have to cry out to people who wouldn't help them. My children also knew that whoever did not water the vegetables after school, wouldn't get lunch money for school because the money came from the vegetables we sold."(September 2023)

This finding informs us that these respondents have a high bonding social capital. The three respondents in this category of farmers in the study are from the middle class, I classify them under the middle class because of their occupation, income, and social status. Two of them are retired school teachers and one is a retired nurse. These three farmers are not members of any cooperative due to not seeing the benefits of being part of a cooperative as discussed in chapter 4, and believing that they are achieving so much more by farming on their own. And indeed they seemed successful in their farming, taking from the fieldwork I conducted and the conversations I engaged in with them. The three women have always farmed since they were young brides, coming onto their husbands' land, but commercializing their vegetables is something that took a turn once they had reached retirement age for two of the non-cooperative farmers.

Non-Cooperative Farmer 1 said: "After I retired in 2002 I started by planting maize, due to the need to feed the family and I also have a vegetable garden which the family consumes."(October 2022)

Her focus is strictly on subsistence farming, even when she has a surplus, she shares it with extended family members. On the other hand, non-coop farmer 6 felt like teaching had delayed her success in farming,

"Had I just paid attention to farming, I would have been very successful, but I spent most of my time teaching, and that did not leave enough time for farming." (September 2023).

The remaining 5 non-coop farmers who are not of the same class as the three farmers described above, also had a reliance on their family members. Looking at both the non-coop farmers and farmers in Sunset cooperative, bonding social capital is on the high side. The findings also show that the non-coop farmers' family assistance did help them to access government resources like the tractors that are subsidized by the government for farmers which I elaborate on below.

Government subsidies

Eswatini has endured more frequent and severe extreme weather over the previous years including the drought brought on by the El Nino in 2015/2016 which led to a sharp decrease in crop outputs and crop diversity. During the 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 planting seasons, the country saw maize production drop by 67 per cent during the planting season (Kunene, 2018). This drop in maize production which affected subsistence farmers, led to the Kingdom of Eswatini forging a partnership with the Republic of India to introduce agricultural input subsidy programmes in 2014. According to Dlamini et al (2019), the programmes principal goal was to increase maize productivity among SNL farmers and stimulate the economy. Since farmers do not pay the entire cost, the input subsidies help them to meet the market price midway. Therefore, input subsidies could offer a way to increase agricultural production, enhance food security, and promote pro-poor economic growth through reduced food costs. Currently, the government of Eswatini through the Ministry of Agriculture is subsidizing the tractor hire service for farmers and farming inputs. For the input subsidy programme and the tractor hire service programme, the government of Eswatini has set aside E32.2 million and E10 million, respectively. At least 5,000–6,000 farmers are expected to gain from the initiative, according to the government's projections. When compared to the previous farming season, fewer farmers will receive benefits (Mkhonta, 2023). In 2022, 11, 519 farmers benefited from the subsidy programme because the government had received a loan in the amount of E112 million from the African Development Bank, hence the decline of beneficiaries in 2023 (Mkhonta, 2023). The loan helped farmers by protecting them from the high input costs they had to pay over the previous year as a result of COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which had an impact on economies all over the world by driving up the price of commodities, petrol, and inflation in general. For the tractor hiring service in 2023, the Eswatini government will give E180 per tractor per hour, while the farmer will contribute E400. The farmer will then be expected to pay E580 per tractor per hour once the budget has been used up (Mkhonta, 2023). While conducting my follow-up interviews, farmers were busy booking tractors as it is planting season and this service is on a first-come-first-serve basis.

The findings in this study show that the government's initiative on the subsidies is something the women farmers take advantage of since they do not own the machinery. Interestingly, the farmers who could afford to hire the tractor at E580, 00, try to be the first in line to hire the tractor at E400, 00. Here, we can see that it depends on how connected you are because considering that this financial year only between 5000-6000 farmers stand to benefit from this initiative. A study in Tanzania is in line with the findings of this study that well-off farmers benefited more from a subsidy programme in that country (Kato and Greeley. 2016).

Government Subsidies and Cooperative Farmers

Sunset cooperative members are also dependent on the government's machinery and they also try to take advantage of the subsidy programmes as do many farmers do. The tractors are accessed at RDA and farmers have to make a booking so that the tractor can come through to their plot. With most farmers needing to tilt the land at the same time, it becomes challenging for the tractors to be used by all the farmers who have booked for it. This is where the cooperative farmers experienced challenges, the tractor did not get to them at the time they needed it as there is a window period between turning the soil and planting.

Cooperative farmer 4 "When we go to book for a tractor, we are either told they are not available or have broken down and this is a setback because it means the soil will not be turned in time and we will not plant in time." (October 2022)

A study in Ghana echoes cooperative farmer 4s words. Asante et al (2011) stipulated that in order for the farmer's efforts on the farm to deliver good yields, improved returns, and increased outcomes, small-scale farmers will need timely access to mechanical services such as tractors with ploughs, harrows, and ridges. The tractors are not dispersed equally among farmers in time, one of the challenges could be that some of the tractors broke down and were never fixed, one of the reasons the study established was that the officers at RDA use their discretion where the tractors go and when.

Cooperative farmer 1 stated that: "We try to book for the tractor way ahead of time so that we can secure the booking. However, what tends to happen is that the tractors do not get to us on time. Since the constituency of Ludzeludze is quite big with five chiefdoms, which are Mbekelweni, Zombodze, Nkamanzi. eKudzeni, and Lozitha. The extension officers claim to use their discretion as to who will they send the tractor to first, sometimes they claim to consider the farmers they perceive to be serious about farming as the ones to get the tractors first. I don't know how they determine that because booking for a tractor shows what one's intention is." (October 2022).

Cooperative farmer 1 was visibly frustrated by this matter, however, this finding could not be verified since this study did not interview extension officers. The policy adopted by RDA in Ludzeludze to use their discretion as to who gets the services of the tractor first is a questionable one. This line of thinking may work for their offices however this leads to the most vulnerable not accessing services offered by the state. Essentially, linking capital for farmers entails underprivileged communities creating vertical connections with external resources (Mafongoya, 2022), in this instance the state-run RDA, to obtain resources for farmers in need of support. There are shortcomings that have been linked to linking social capital such as nepotism and corruption (Szreter and Woolcock, 2004) however the study did not establish this infirmity, nor can it be ruled out. During my fieldwork, one of the observations I made while moving from one farmer's homestead to the next, when I happen to come across a tractor on the road random people would stop it and try to convince the driver to go by their homestead and ask if he would be willing to drop the price for them.

<u>Government Subsidies and Non-Coop Farmers</u>

Given the success that some of the non-coop farmers seem to have with their farming, most of the respondents in this category did not own the machinery offered by the state, hence they too booked for the tractors. One of the respondents, a non-cooperative farmer could not afford to hire the tractor at the subsidized rate even though she has the land, this means that she has to use primitive methods of turning her soil and she will not be able to cover a large space using her bare hands. She pointed out a little patch that she had started working on her own.

Non-coop farmer 7 stated: "Since I simply cannot afford to hire the tractor at RDA I have to do what I can because we are now in the farming season. I usually depend on my grandchildren to support me, but if they are not in a position to assist, I have to do what I can. My children don't help me much, they hardly come home." (September 2023)

Non-coop farmer 7's socio-economic status is poor, her bonding social capital is also not so high ultimately affecting her means to get the support which results in a domino effect whereby most of her land may not get to be utilized for planting of maize which is the staple in Eswatini. This will result in her family facing food insecurity because even though she has a garden patch, they cannot solely depend on that. The findings also reveal that some of the farmers in this category had the means to help them access the tractors.

Non-coop farmer 2 stated that: "since we have come out of COVID-19, I haven't landed on my feet just yet since hiring transport is so costly now and I am not able to move as many cabbages to retailers as I would like to. So financially my husband supports me and in that way, I am able to hire the tractor at RDA. Sometimes when I go to register to hire the tractor, and I'm told it's not available or if the list is long, I sometimes hire from members in the community who own a tractor." (October 2022)

The findings in this study show that some farmers in this category have connections and relations with community members which make it possible for them to continue with farming. When farmers hire tractors from their neighbours they pay slightly less than the E400,00 stipulated by the state. This finding demonstrates that some non-coop farmers do not wait to access the support from the state, if they can they simply get on with it. This finding also demonstrates that social capital is important among farmers, the recurring trend among farmers in both categories is that family is their most important capital, they are able to farm because of the support from family. The findings also let us know that without sufficient linking capital, both farmers in and out of a cooperative are not able to access resources which are meant to propel their economic and food security circumstances. The non-coop farmers with the exception of two farmers in this category seem to have higher social capital compared to cooperative farmers resulting in them gaining access to resources but not always from the state or NGOs.

With the support that some farmers are able to access from the state and/or NGOs, it has enabled them to sow back into their communities. Below I discuss how a non-cooperative farmer has sowed back into the lives of orphaned and vulnerable children in Ludzeludze highlighting the strengths of a high social capital. First I will give a brief overview of how HIV/AIDS has impacted the lives of children in Eswatini.

Community

HIV/AIDS disrupted family and community support networks in Eswatini, as seen by the sharp rise in the proportion of vulnerable children and households with young children and old adults. According to national estimates, there are 90,127 orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) at the moment (WFP, 2019). "OVC either have HIV or are negatively affected by the epidemic, and their caregivers often suffer from ill health and economic challenges that result in reliance on elderly family members, the community, or the government to provide the support and protection they need." (WFP, 2019 para. 7). With this backdrop which also highlights social capital, the findings show that non-coop farmer 6 assisted with child-headed homes by teaching children how to farm. Non-coop farmer 6 worked with FAO on this project, recall that Non-coop farmer 6 had already established a working relationship with FAO through supporting her with her mango trees. This project required farmers to assist with training child-headed families in agricultural farming. A study that looked into the connection between food security and social capital found that irrespective of household income, there is a correlation between social capital in the home and community and a decreased risk of hunger (Martin et al. 2004).

Non-cooperative farmer 6 stated: "HIV/AIDS hit some families really hard in the 1990s, then I was a full-time teacher but I was farming on the side. Since I attend farmers' workshops religiously, I was approached by FAO stating that they needed farmers from Ludzeludze to assist with teaching child-headed homesteads farming skills. They would donate food and farming inputs to some of the families and I just needed to impart knowledge to these children. I would teach the children on Saturdays, I was never compensated financially for this and I did it for over 20 years."(September 2023)

Through the intervention of FAO drawing in local farmers to work with them on a project to ensure food security in child-headed homesteads, it was possible for such families to receive support from an international organization to which they otherwise would not have had access. The findings demonstrate the trust levels that FAO had with Non-coop farmer 6 given the twenty-plus years she has worked with the organization. This finding demonstrates that bonding, bridging, and linking social capital need to be present for people to access resources, but not necessarily all of them. Woolcock and Sweetser (2002) define the three terms as follows: "Bonding social capital refers to connections of people such as neighbours, relatives and colleagues. Bridging social capital refers to connections to people who are different in a demographic sense, people whom one does not contact regularly but are crucial in one's life. And finally linking social capital pertains to connections with people in power, whether they are in politically or financially influential positions." (P. 26). This finding reveals the three types of social capital not working in isolation and making it possible for the child-headed homes to receive support, and it also demonstrates the important role of farmers especially if they too can have access to support. The study did not establish this kind of role displayed by cooperative members, nor did they have access to all three types of social capital.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that one of the ways that government supports a cooperative is through training at the inception of a cooperative. This training that cooperatives receive, they go on and teach new members about how a cooperative works. Non-coop farmers do not receive this kind of training afforded to cooperative members, however, they gain knowledge and training from attending trade fairs and workshops, which some cooperative members attend. The chapter also demonstrated that for cooperative farmers unable to attend workshops, they learn from their colleagues demonstrating the power of social capital when accessing support. Extension officers are another form of support offered by the state and NGOs to farmers unfortunately there are not enough extension officers for both farmers in a cooperative and non-coop farmers resulting in farmers not receiving support. The chapter further went on to show how farmers contribute to employment in Ludzeludze, and how government subsidies are not accessed by the most vulnerable. Finally, the chapter demonstrated how a non-coop farmer sows back into the community as a result of receiving support from an international organization highlighting the importance of social capital.

The succeeding chapter is the conclusion chapter of the study, this chapter will lay out recommendations, and limitations encountered.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

Introduction

The two results chapters in this report are summarized in this chapter. The conclusions are drawn from a thematic analysis that was carried out once the data gathering had concluded. Additionally, the goals of the research study served as inspiration. The study set out to ascertain the nature and extent of support that women smallholder farmers in and out of a cooperative received from the state and Non-Governmental Organizations. The objective of the study was to compare the assistance received by the two categories of farmers in Ludzeludze. The chapter will begin by examining the support or lack thereof that exists in the area of market and financial access. This will be followed by a discussion of social capital's effects and how it benefits female farmers in both categories. Finally, the study's recommendations will be discussed and limitations.

Access to Markets for Farmers in and out of a Cooperative

Going into this study the expectation was to come across thriving agricultural cooperatives in Ludzeludze and smallholder farmers outside of a cooperative barely making it, and yet the opposite was true. The study established that women smallholder farmers in cooperatives are not supported by the state and NGOs in accessing formal markets, hence leading to most of them not partaking in that particular market. This finding suggests that the cooperative members in this study lack resources to purchase inputs and importantly their age is working against them as most of them are of elderly age. Non-coop farmers were found to be more actively engaged in the formal market and they too did not receive any form of support from the state and NGOs. Two of the non-coop farmers engaged in the formal market were below the age of 60 years with one non-coop farmer being a retired professional. Suggesting that they were young and energetic and could afford to purchase inputs. The study also established that due to there being no formal contract between farmers supplying retailers and the retailers, this left farmers vulnerable as there was no guarantee that retailers would order from them again.

Looking at the informal market, the state in collaboration with international organizations, the findings show that this was the market niche where there seemed to be support for the farmers both in a cooperative and outside. The state opened up a market for farmers in the local primary schools to supply vegetables for the school feeding programme. Sunset Cooperative members participated in this scheme despite the fact that some of them believed the frequent price fluctuations had rendered them unprofitable. In 2023, the Eswatini government ended the project without providing farmers with a justification or a substitute market, which had a significant negative impact on the farmers. Only one non-coop farmer supplied a primary school from the respondents, and unlike the cooperative members who were stopped from supplying the school, she was not stopped. The study established that cooperatives were supported by various international organizations and the non-coop farmer was supported by one NGO, TAVI. The two categories of farmers also supplied different vegetables to different schools. Cooperative farmers supplied the school with common vegetables such as spinach, potatoes and tomatoes whereas the non-coop farmer supplied a different school with indigenous vegetables such as African eggplant and Madeira. Outside of the school feeding programme, the state and organizations did not provide any form of support to farmers, and the study found that this was the market that both farmers in and out of a cooperative were actively engaged in and their clientele encompassed the community and street vendors.

The study established that there is poor dissemination of information for cooperative farmers in Ludzeludze. Most of the members in the cooperative planted the same vegetables, unless some members had a contract with NAMBoard would they plant something different. They had no knowledge of the gaps in the market as a result a lot of their produce went to waste post-harvest. Non-coop farmers also faced the same challenge.

Access to Credit for Farmers in and out of a Cooperative

The conclusion from Ludzeludze pertaining to access to credit was that the government and local NGOs made efforts to make credit accessible to farmers both in a cooperative and outside of a cooperative. This was done through the RDF which targeted cooperatives, microfinance and NGOs with the objective of supporting farmers. The study established that farmers both in and out of a cooperative did not take the loans made available which did not even need farmers to have collateral except for the RDF which had a prerequisite that cooperatives have collateral among other requirements that the cooperative members could not fulfil. Non-coop farmers did not take out any loans either, the study established that the retired professionals relied on their pension along with their revenue from selling their produce, hence they did not feel the need to borrow money. The research also established that some of the credit services available to farmers, farmers in and out of a cooperative were not familiar with them. Finally, the findings on the level of social capital on farmers expose how social capital is important in farmers accessing support.

Social Capital

The findings in this chapter established that social capital helps farmers to access support, however due to low social capital outside of their (farmers) immediate networks such as family, cooperative members and neighbours this does not give them access to support from the state and NGOs. This finding was for both farmers in and out of a cooperative, bonding social capital was of high levels. Cooperative farmers at Sunset Cooperative had high bonding social levels which permitted them to gain knowledge from fellow members who could attend trainings and workshops hosted by the state and NGOs. However, when working with extension officers, the findings show that there were low levels of trust between the cooperative members and extension officers leading to the farmers not having access to knowledge and current information on technology. In the case of non-coop farmers, the findings show that at least one non-coop farmer stayed in constant contact with an extension officer giving them access to support. Another form of support that was available to farmers through the Eswatini government, was subsidizing tractor hire for farmers, the study showed that some farmers in a cooperative could not get the tractor on time, in the case of non-coop farmers if they could not get access to the tractor they hired it from community members who owned a tractor. Finally, the findings in the study demonstrated that with all three types of social capital available in communities, and if farmers gain support from the state and NGOs, farmers are also able to give back to their communities.

The study found that support in some areas is available to farmers and the findings also show that the support is mostly directed to cooperative farmers. The findings also inform us that the support is not accessible to some farmers both in and out of a cooperative due to a lack of resources including social capital. The state has to employ and train more extension officers as they are accessible to farmers, and the government needs to prioritize the financial mechanism structures for extension officers. The government of Eswatini should also implement policies that will be effective for farmers accessing the formal and informal markets.

Further research in the area of support for farmers could help in guiding policymakers as well as directly address the deficiencies of support and alleviate poverty among women smallholder farmers.

Limitations

During any process of research, limitations are bound to be encountered by a researcher and this was no different for me. Residing in South Africa and conducting the study in Eswatini, did to a certain extent limit my time spent with the farmers, I could not always engage with them. However, the farmers were open to availing themselves whenever I could travel to Eswatini. Another limitation I encountered was that NGOs in the area that work specifically with women farmers did not want to avail themselves for the research, each time I engaged them in writing and telephonically, they initially agreed, however when I approached their offices they declined without giving an explanation. The research will give secondary literature on the engagement of NGOs with women farmers, however, it may not focus specifically on farmers in the Ludzeludze constituency.

Conclusion

This report has demonstrated that support for women farmers in and outside of cooperatives is important, and how a lack of support jeopardizes the efforts of farmers especially in the areas of markets and credit. The support from the state and organizations directed to farmers is crucial and yet more can and needs to be done by these entities. Based on the performance of non-coop farmers in Ludzeludze, they (farmers) clearly need to be provided with more support. The cooperative in Ludzeludze is at risk of being phased out, given the ages of most of the members in the cooperative, hence the youth needs to be roped in as a form of continuation which will also alleviate poverty and address the unemployment issue in the area. The report also demonstrated the importance of social capital among farmers, and further research on this subject could lead to creating new ideas on how best the state and NGOs can support smallholder farmers, leading to policies that will be impactful on smallholder farmers in and outside of cooperatives in Eswatini.

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Appendix A: Participation Information Sheet

TITLE: Supporting women small-scale farmers in Eswatini: Comparing women small-scale farmers in co-operatives to women small-scale farmer not in co-operatives.

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Please take time to read the following information. Please ask me questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like for me to give you more information.

WHO I AM AND WHAT THE STUDY IS ABOUT

I am a Masters student in the department of sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of my studies, I am investigating whether women small scale farmers receive any form of support. The title of my project: Support for women small-scale farmers in Eswatini: Comparing women small-scale farmers in co-operatives to those outside of co-operatives. I am interested in finding out how women small scale farmers are supported and how that support helps them in their farming. The information I get from this research may inform us of the route that needs to be considered when it comes to women small scale farmers.

WHAT WILL TAKING PART INVOLVE?

The research will involve me asking you questions, you do not need to fill in any form. The questions I will ask are about the support that women small scale farmers in co-operatives and women small-scale farmers outside of co-operatives receive from the government. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded and the interview will last for about 30 minutes.

WHY HAVE YOU BEEN INVITED?

You have been invited because you are in the agricultural sector and you are knowledgeable about the topic I am researching.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART?

Participation in this research is completely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time during the interview.

POSSIBLE RISKS AND BENEFITS

No risks are expected to arise from this research. The benefits lie in the information collected from this research and how it can help us know more about this sector.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your confidentiality will not be jeopardized and no information will be traced back to you. I will not be requesting your national identity numbers and I will use pseudonyms. I will conceal the reported characteristics of participants such as your occupation. Data will be backed-up on removable devices such as USB and discs and will be safely secured and unidentifiable, back-up will also be on a password protected computer which will also be secured. The data collected will be destroyed after 2 years when the information will no longer be needed.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If you need more information, my supervisor Prof. Bridget Kenny can be contacted at (+27) 0117174445

THANK YOU

Appendix B: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

SUPPORTING WOMEN SMALLHOLDER FARMERS IN ESWATINI: COMPARING THOSE IN CO-OPERATIVES TO THOSE OUTSIDE OF C0-OPERATIVES

This study seeks to establish the nature and scale of support received by women smallholder farmers in Eswatini, as women play a critical role in generating food for families and communities and smallholder agriculture is two to four times more effective than any other sector at decreasing hunger and poverty.

University of the Witwatersrand

Ntfombiyenkhosi P. Lukhele

I ……………………………………………………agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

1.	The research study was explained to me	Yes	No
2.	I understand that I can withdraw at any time of the study	Yes	No
3.	I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study	Yes	No
4.	I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	Yes	No
5.	I agree that direct quotations from my interview may be used		

By the researcher in their research report Yes No

N.B. Information collected will be stored in a password protected computer, and a removable USB disc with identifying features removed and destroyed after 2 years.

Signature …………………………………….

Name …………………………………………

Date …………………………………………..

Appendix C: Semi structured Questionnaire For Women Farmers

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR WOMEN SMALLHOLDER FARMERS OUTSIDE OF CO-OPERATIVES

I am a Master's student in the department of sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of my studies, I am investigating whether women smallholder farmers receive any form of support. The title of my project is: Support for women small-scale farmers in Eswatini: Comparing women smallholder farmers in co-operatives to those outside of co-operatives. To gather this information, I need people with your experience and knowledge. This interview will last 30 minutes at most and please note that covid-19 protocols of wearing a face mask, sanitizing and social distancing will be observed at all times.

1. Name
2. Age
3. Gender
4. Level of education
5. How long have you been farming?
6. What motivated you to start farming?
7. Why are you not part of a co-operative?
8. Do you receive any form of support from the government or other agencies related to agriculture?
9. If yes what kind of support? If not, what kind of support do you need?
10. How do you gain access to the market?
11. How do you gain access to credit?
12. What challenges do you experience as a farmer?
13. What forms of support lie outside formal support from the government and NGOs?
14. What form of contribution have you made towards the support received?

Appendix D: Questionnaire for officials

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR OFFICIALS

I am a Masters student in the department of sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of my studies, I am investigating whether women smallholder farmers receive any form of support. The title of my project is: Support for women smallholder farmers in Eswatini: Comparing women smallholder farmers in co-operatives to those outside of co-operatives. To gather this data, I need people of your calibre with experience and knowledge. This interview will last 30 minutes at most and please note that covid-19 protocols of wearing a face mask and sanitizing will be observed.

Questions

1. Name
2. Gender
3. Age
4. Profession
5. Years of experience
6. Does your organization have data on women small-scale farmers?
7. How does the organization maintain this data?
8. Do women farmers understand the available agricultural platforms that are available to them?
9. How do women farmers access offices for assistance?
10. What kind of support does your organization give women smallholder farmers?
11. How effective is this support offered to women farmers?
12. How do you think farmers benefit from the support?