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AN EVALUATION OF BLACK CROP FARMERS FACING ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES IN THE MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

Applied Research Project

Submitted by

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[August 2022]

STATEMENT OF DECLARATION

I Matrix Kulani Makukule declare that this research report entitled 'Analysis of the challenges facing black crop farmers in the Mpumalanga province' is my own unaided work. All of the concepts I have used have been properly credited, attributed, and referenced. The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, Master of Business Administration (MBA) program has accepted this paper as a partial fulfilment of the criteria. This is the firsttime I have ever turned in a report like this for any other degree or examination to any another university.



Matrix Kulani Makukule

Signed at Johannesburg, 28 March 2022

Table 1: Research Article

Project Format:	Research Article
Nominated Journal:	Global Journal of Agricultural Sciences
Supplementary files:	Data collection instrument Schedule of interview question Map of Mpumalanga Province

ABSTRACT

Black crop farmers continue to play a key role in South Africa's agriculture. However, they have been faced with a lot of challenges. The objective of this study was to investigate the obstacles that stood in their way, the types of crops that they raised, and the potential solutions to their predicament. The study used qualitative research methodologies and was based on a sample of farmers from the province of Mpumalanga. These farmers were interviewed, and the responses were analysed in terms of their quality. Because they did not have appropriate access to lands, agricultural financing, and technical help, the findings imply that black crop farmers were impoverished. Land reform, equal access to agricultural finance, and technical assistance were some of the recommendations made.

Key words: Black, crop, farmers, land, agriculture, finance

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ANC	Africa National Congress
BFASA	Black Farmers Associations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MMR	Mixed Research Methodology
MP	Mpumalanga
SA	South Africa
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
STATSA	Statistics South Africa

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I could not have finished my applied research project without the support of my loved ones. I owe a debt of gratitude to my parents whose unwavering support and encouragement inspire me in all that I do. They are the epitome of what it means to be a good role model.

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 Context of and Background to the Study

The duality that has emerged as a result of past regimes' disempowering policies and attitudes toward black people is one of the most serious issues confronting the South African economy and society as a whole. This is especially evident in the agricultural sector, which is divided into large commercial farms (mostly owned by white people) and much smaller subsistence farms (mostly owned by black people) that lack physical and financial resources, as well as the expertise, to develop profitable and sustainable operations (Mokese, 2018).

According to Muller (2011), the Bethal experience shows the treatment of blacks in the potato business and their systematic disempowerment. The narrative is not unique to Bethal or the Potato business, but it encapsulates the farming reality of the Eastern Transvaal (now Mpumalanga) in the 1950s. Muller (2011) again pointed out that one of the detrimental impacts of the apartheid laws was the control of labour supply in an agricultural sector that had grown increasingly capitalist in orientation.

The region was marked by a strong demand for labour, unlawful and forceful tactics, child labour, substantial use of convict labour (with farmers establishing prison farms to obtain cheap labour) and prison-like farm living conditions (Muller, 2011). Labour violations at the period, which occurred under the watchful eye of minister of Bantu Administration and Development, M.D.C de Wet, were confirmed by workers Jacob Makfela and Samuel Sebhedi, who related their experiences on Mr. H. Beldden's potato farm (Muller, 2011).

With the end of apartheid in 1994 and the democratisation of south Africa, the country was faced with the reality of needing to build a

stable society for the benefit of all South Africans. As a result, the democratically elected African National Congress (ANC) government developed and implemented policies centred on preserving human dignity, eliminating racism and sexism, and ensuring the universal right to a free vote and prosperity for all citizens, all of which are enshrined in the South African Constitution, as a result, one of the new government's primary priorities became rural development to eliminate poverty among black farmers.

According to Gumede (2012), the government's public policies and legislative actions since 1994 may be characterised as a particular effort to extend the ideal of liberty to include social Justice which is concerned with human development and socio-economic fairness (Gumede, 2012). In the agricultural context, such efforts have included the passage of various pieces of legislations aimed at promoting agrarian reform and correcting the injustices of previous legislations, particularly the disempowering legislations such as the Water Act and the Land Reform Act (Sandry & Vink, 2007).

1.2 Research Conceptualisation

1.2.1 The research problem statement

South African black farmers have growing ambitions. They want land, funding, and other supports to help improve their farming from subsistence to profitable agriculture. But the shackles of the previous apartheid regime and the inability of the post-apartheid government to address their challenges, are limiting them from achieving their ambitions. As a result, black farmers who make the majority of famers in South Africa, are not efficient, effective and profitable and by extension, most of them have remained poor rural farmers (Cochet, 2015).

Evidence from review of literature shows that similar studies have been done in the South Africa by Nel and Davies (2019) and Khoza et al. (2019) covering the Eastern Cape Province and Gauteng Province respectively. This study as noted will extend the literature to Mpumalanga Province. While Sebola (2005) and Shaol et al. (2004) recognises the existence of small black crop farmers in South Africa, it lacks significant information or insight into the industry. Another research need has been identified as a result of this. Given the scarcity of empirical information pertaining to smallholder crop producers, benchmark research that comprehensively analyses their requirements and recommends relevant solutions that would favourably influence their commercial lives has become more necessary. This is in line with Aliber et al. (2009) and Aliber et al. (2011), who believe that existing surveys and statistics have failed to capture the nature and scope of small-sale and subsistence agricultural output, resulting in a gap in knowledge. This study establishes a profile of black crop farmers in Mpumalanga all of whom have been identified as having strong agricultural presence by Statistics South Africa.

For many South African farmers, the Land Act confines them to just 13 percent of their land, according to a literature study by FAOSTAT. In addition to being racially inequitable, the 87 percent of South Africa that falls under the "White" area's jurisdiction is practically encouraging large-scale, mechanized farming (Okunlola & Ngubane, 2016).

Many small-scale black farmers are confined to economic activity in the informal sector, with a focus on primary agricultural production, while commercial white farmers have footprints throughout the agricultural and agricultural-processing value chain

(Fan, Li & Macho, 2013). Increasing income, employment, food availability and nutrition, as well as fostering social and cultural well-being are all benefits of agro-processing that help sustain smallholder farmers' livelihoods over the long term (Mhazo, Mvumi, & Nazare, 2012).

Before 1994, South Africa's rural development programs largely benefitted white commercial farmers while continuing to exploit black labourers on the homelands. Since then, when the first democratically elected government in South Africa took office, a shift in rural development policy has occurred, with aid programs emerging to support the black labour force (Binns, Hill & Nel, 1997). However, many rural black communities feel disempowered, lack self-expression, and are used to having others listen to them as a result of years of top-down decision-making by the apartheid regime (Binns et al., 1997).

Despite the development initiatives launched in most rural regions of South Africa to help promote rural and small-scale black farmers, Mapiye, Chinmoyo, Muchenjy, & Marufu, (2007) claim that no attempt has been made to add value to the current basic agricultural goods. Small-scale black farmers have been marginalised and they appear to have been having difficulty processing their agricultural goods and participating in the commercial agro-processing value chain (Mmbengwa, Ramukumba, Groenewald & Shcalkwyk, 2012).

The persistence of these facts over the decades since independence in 1994 indicate that there is a gap that requires further investigation and understanding, particularly in order to answer the overarching question: "why are black crop farmers facing economic difficulties in South Africa especially the Mpumalanga province?

1.2.2 The research purpose statement

The aim of this study is to evaluate the characteristics of black crop farmers and their agricultural operations in few villages in South Africa's Mpumalanga Province. The study identifies and discusses the difficulties that black crop farmers face, as well as address gaps in literatures for example, by Nel and Davies (2019) and Khoza, Senyoylo and Soundy (2019). These studies only covered the Eastern Cape Province and Gauteng Province respectively, this study extends the literature to Mpumalanga Province. Unlike previous studies, this study also provides an empirical thematic analysis of the challenges of black crop farmers in South Africa. The main objectives are to:

- Establish the profile of black crop farmers in South Africa.
- Evaluate the agricultural activities that black crop farmers participate in.
- Identify the challenges facing black crop farmers; and
- Explore potential solutions to the challenges facing these black crop farmers in South Africa's Mpumalanga province.

To achieve these objectives, black crop farmers in the South Africa's Mpumalanga province were interviewed. Qualitative analysis was done using the interview responses. A sample of famers were selected, interviewed, content analysis, coding, and thematic analyses.

1.2.3 Research questions

The overall research question is "what are the reasons black crop farmers facing economic difficulties in South Africa especially Mpumalanga province?" the specific research questions are:

- To what extent are black farmers well-off?
- Which types of crops are black crop farmers growing?
- What are the challenges facing black crop farmers? And

- What potential solutions are there to the challenges facing these black crop farmers in South Africa's Mpumalanga province.

1.3 Delimitations and Assumptions of the Research Study

The problems of black farmers in South Africa are two folds. Those that are manmade and those that are natural. Natural challenges of earthquakes, landslides, droughts, fires and hailstorms and other natural disasters affecting black crop farmers were not considered in the study. However, those man-made problems created during the apartheid regime and the failure of the post-apartheid government to resolve them and their effects on the black poor crop farmers will be studied. This is on the assumption that they could be solved since they could be identified.

1.4 Significance of the Research Study

This study fills in the research by deviating from previous studies (Cochet, 2015; Okunlola & Ngubane, 2016) which only provide a theoretical and literature analysis of black crop farmers in South Africa. This study provides an empirical qualitative thematic analysis of black crop farmers in South Africa. It also deviates from previous studies for example, Nel and Davies (2019) and Khoza et al. (2019) which only focussed on Eastern Cape Province and Gauteng Province respectively. This study extends the literature to Mpumalanga Province as well.

This study becomes necessary given the facts that most countries of the world are developing based on their ability to transform their farmers from nonprofitable to profitable farmers. Studies have shown that transforming farmers from nonprofitable to profitable farmers thereby eliminating their economic challenges, helps to stimulates economic development of developing or emerging economies. The

findings of this study may have an impact on the creation of a theoretical framework that will help eliminate the economic difficulties of black crop farmers.

1.5 Preface to the Research Report

In order to accomplish this, the study was broken into three sections. Chapter 2 includes a literature assessment of the problem, the past investigations, the explanatory framework, and the conceptual framework, which follows this introduction chapter. Research strategy, design, methodologies, reliability, and validityas well as limits are discussed in Chapter 3 of this book. The fourth chapter provides an organised view of the data acquired while answering the research questions derived from the literature review. This chapter answers the research questions before offering recommendations. It goes over the data source, methodology, and estimation strategy that will be used to meet the goals. The fifth chapter concludes with recommendations, limitations, and future research directions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a review of the existing literature on the phenomenon under investigation. It is a review of research on the subject that can be accessible electronically from credible websites with journals that are professionally and academically regarded around the world. The review illuminates the theoretical framework that serves as the foundation for suggesting the primary hypotheses that will be empirically explored in this study. An overview of South Africa's agriculture sector and the research area is provided. The empirical literature gap is also investigated. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks are also presented. A summary of the literature studied concludes the chapter.

2.2 Overview of The Agricultural Sector in South Africa

In south Africa, there are two types of agriculture: the well-developed commercial farming with well-established supply networks (dominated by white farmers) and small-scale subsistence farming (dominated by poor black farmers). Agriculture has consistently provided 2.6 percent of GDP throughout the years, but it is crucial in terms of employment creation and foreign currency production through exports (Hlatshwayo et al., 2021). Compared to other African countries, South Africa'sagricultural sector employs only 5% of its workforce and is on the decline, while providing work for casual workers (Hlatshwayo et al., 2021). This land can onlybe used to grow crops in 13.5 per cent of the total area, with only 3 per cent regarded appropriate (Hlatshwayo et al., 2021).

South Africa is a notable producer of chicory roots (fourth), grapefruits (fourth), cereals (seventh), green maize and maize

(eighth), castor oil seed (ninth) and pears (ninth) (10 percent). About 60,000 farm workers and an additional 40,000 individuals depend on the dairy industry's 4,300 milk producers for their livelihoods (Kgosiemang & Oladele, 2012).

2.3 Description of the Study Site

This research was carried out in the three district municipalities of Ehlanzeni, Gert Sibande, and Nkangala in Mpumalanga Province. It is out South Africa's eight-largest province, with the fifth-largest number of home farmers. Because it is home to some of the most economically disadvantaged armers, it was chosen as the research location. Mpumalanga is a South African Province. The phrase literally means "the location where the sun rises" in Swazi, Xhosa, Ndebele, and Zulu languages.

This research was carried out in the three district municipalities of Ehlanzeni, Gert Sibande, and Nkangala in Mpumalanga Province. It is South Africa's eight-largest province, with the fifth-largest number of home farmers. Because it is home to some of the most economically disadvantaged farmers, it was chosen as the research location. Mpumalanga is a South African Province. The phrase literally means "the location where the sun rises" in Swazi, Xhosa, Ndebele, and Zulu languages. In eastern South Aria, Mpumalanga has borders with Eswatini and Mozambique (see the map in Appendix I).

It covers about 6.5 percent of South Africa's totalland area. In terms of geography, Limpopo, Gauteng, the Free State, and Kwazulu-Natal are all provinces that border it. Capital of Mbombela is Mbombela The Transvaal Province, which once included Mpumalanga, is now extinct. It was known as Eastern Transvaal until August 24, 1995 when it was renamed to its current name. The eastern half of the

picturesque tourism zone around the Escarpment and the Mpumalanga Lowveld, which borders the Kruger National Park, was originally referred to as Eastern Transvaal.

The Lowveld is subtropical due to its position and proximity to the warm Indian Ocean. The Highveld is substantially colder due to its elevation of 2300m to 1700m above sea level. The Drakensberg escarpment receives the most precipitation, while all other sites are relatively well-watered by predominantly summer thunderstorms. On the Highveld, heavy frost is a common occurrence. Unlike the Highveld, the Lowveld is almost entirely devoid of frost. The escarpment is the only place in the winter where rain is common, with the exception of the occasional sprinkling. It is an hour's journey from Belfast to Mbombela on the Lowveld, which is a stark contrast to the Highveld. Mbombela's greatest temperature in January is 29° C (the lowest temperature is 19° C), while the highest temperature is 23° C in July. Belfast's coldest temperature in January is 12 degrees Celsius, while its maximum temperature is 15 degrees Celsius in June (Mahlangu & Sekgota, 2018).

Highveld's dry climate contrasts with the humid and stifling conditions of the Lowveld, where winters may be brutal. Mpumalanga is 68% agriculturally based. Wheat, corn, sorghum; sunflower seed; macadamia; groundnuts; sugar cane; vegetables; coffee; tea; tobacco; citrus fruit; subtropical and deciduous fruit; and tobacco are only some of the crops farmed. In the far northeastern corner of the province, near Sabie, there is a significant amount of forestry. South Africa's largest paper factory is located in Ngodwana, which is near to the forest (Sappi). About 14% of Mpumalanga's land is used for natural grazing. The main products are beef, mutton, wool, poultry, and dairy.

2.4 Farming in Mpumalanga Province

The population of Mpumalanga is economically engaged, with a high unemployment rate of 32,9% among those between the ages of 15 and 65. The vast majority of individuals are landless and destitute (Hlatshwayo et al., 2021). Children make up a large portion of the population, which places a heavy reliance burden on each wage earner. Being unemployed or losing one's employment is viewed as entering poverty. According to Krige as in Hlatshwayo et al. (2021), as employment is a requirement for determining other basic needs, unemployment may result in poverty, a lack of fulfilment, and exposure to crime. In order to fulfil the rising food demand brought on by a growing population, agriculture must boost production in a sustainable way. Reduced poverty, more income, and improved employment are all benefits of increased agricultural productivity. Currently, the agricultural sector in Mpumalanga contributes 21,2% to employment (Hlatshwayo et al., 2021). It is crucial to invest in people by extending access to Agricultural Education and Training (AET), as this offers trained labour for the economic sector. Strategies to reduce unemployment include job development and skills training. Giving people knowledge and skills that are related to economic success is the main goal of training.

To achieve empowerment, agricultural education and training (AET) is essential. Untrained agricultural workers and farmers pose a risk to themselves, the industry, and the end user. The financial costs of hiring untrained personnel to handle hazardous products might be substantial. Therefore, it is essential that everyone involved in agriculture receives the necessary training. The National Department of Agriculture's (NDA) Directorate: Human Resource Development was tasked with developing a strategic vision for the AET because it recognises the importance of training in reducing poverty and creating jobs. In line with other government departments in South Africa, NDA requested assistance from the Food and Agriculture Organization in developing an appropriate AET Strategy through capacity building of NDA and nine Provincial Departments of Agriculture staff in order to present the policy proposals that will

ensure development of a well-planned and integrated human capital development programme. A project was started to develop a national strategy for agricultural education and training. The project's goal was to create a sustainable methodology for a national strategy on education and training for agriculture and rural development that would ensure the participation of all pertinent parties to the greatest extent possible and would increase the staff's capacity in the national and nine provincial departments of agriculture. Each province nominated two representatives to serve as Provincial Research Officers (PROs), and the National Strategy Formulation Team chose two senior representatives (NSFT).

Mpumalanga is the second-smallest province in terms of the number of commercial farming units, with about 4675 (Hlatshwayo et al., 2021). However, there are 101 051 farm employees in all. Therefore, it's crucial to create jobs in the farming sector in Mpumalanga. There are many different types of farmers in the province, from those who farm for subsistence to those who produce for profit. White farmers make up the majority of the commercial and/or developed farmers in the province, while Black farmers make up the majority of the subsistence and/or developing farmers. The non-urban population of Mpumalanga is 1,706,425 (Hlatshwayo et al., 2021). This means that this province, with its urban population of 094 287, is a little less urbanised. Currently, there are more women working in agriculture than men (Hlatshwayo et al., 2021).

2.5 Empirical Literature and Research Gap

Nel and Davies (2019) in their studies "Farming against the odds: an examination of the challenges facing farming and rural development in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa" examined the challenges facing black farmers in South Arica and Eastern Cape in particular. They used qualitative analysis with data from interviews with farmers. The paper finds out that black farmers were constrained in terms of funding, land, market access and more. The results are similar to the findings of Mokose (2014) and Kriku

(2004). Their limitations are that they are based on qualitative analysis which relied on mere opinions by farmers and as a result are not scientific and could not be relied upon. This creates a gap leading to the need of a more scientific study.

In closing this gap, Khoza et al. (2019) in their study Socio-economic factors influencing smallholder farmers' decision to participate in the agro-processing industry, conducted a more scientific work to identify factors influencing smallholder farmers' participation in the Gauteng Province, South Africa. When conducting their research, they used an organized questionnaire that was administered face-to-face to 102 smallholder farmers who had been randomly selected for the study. This model was used to examine the elements that influence the decision to participate in agro-processing as well as the level of participation. This model was used to examine the elements that influence the decision to participate in agro-processing as well as the level of participation. Similar to Nels and Davies' findings, theirs also (2019). The findings suggest that only 19 percent of smallholder farmers in the Gauteng Province are involved in the agro-processing industry. Factors including educational level, land tenure and agro-processing training and information have contributed to the difficulties faced by armers in their efforts to produce food. Access to market and off-farm income negatively is also a case in point. The gap in the literature here is that the definition of challenges and empowerment in the context of the poor black farmers in South Africa could not only be limited to funding, land tenure, education, access to market. This study closes that gap by examining other challenges and empowerment problems affecting poor black crop famers in South Africa.

While Sebola (2005) and Shaol (2004) recognise the existence of small black crop farmers in South Africa, it lacks significant information or insight into the industry. Another research need has been identified as a result of this. Given the scarcity of empirical information pertaining to smallholder crop producers, benchmark research that comprehensively analyses their requirements and recommends relevant solutions that would favourably influence their commercial lives has become more necessary. This is in line with Aliber & Heart (2009) and Aliber, Baiphethi, de Satge, Denison, Hart, Jacobs and Aberbeke (2011), who believe that existing surveys and statistics have failed to capture the nature and scope of small-sale and subsistence agricultural output, resulting in a gap in knowledge. This study creates a profile of black crop farmers in Mpumalanga all of whom have been identified as having strong agricultural presence by Statistics South Africa.

This research provides practical advice on how to improve empowerment program while also highlighting the disparities in black farmers' engagement in the sector. In addition, by developing an experimentally generated and validated databases of smallholder crop farmers, the project should id in mobilising assistance for excluded farmers allowing them to improve to commercial production levels. Not only these benefits black crop farmers, but also helps to increase food security in general. Agriculture, according to Machete (2004), De Janvry and Sadoulet (2009) an Irwin et al. (2010), playsa critical role in development.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework is a key type of analytical instrument that comes in a variety of shapes and sizes. It may be used in a variety of fields where an overall image is required and also used to

arrange thoughts and create conceptual distinctions (Adom et al., 2018). Strong conceptual frameworks capture something actual in an easy-to-remember and apply manner (Shikalepo, 2020). To highlight conceptual contrast in how major thinkers and authors perceive the world, Berlin (1969) employed the metaphor of a “fox” and a “hedgehog.” Hedgehogs, according to Berlin, are those who perceive the world through a single concept or organizing principle such as Alighieri (1985), Blaise Dostoevsky (1993), Plato, Ibsen and Friedritz (1990).

The theory that forms the theoretical framework is Dualism Theory. Julius Herman Boeke was the first to suggest the concept of dualism in economic growth in 1942, which was later adopted by the World Bank in 1953 (Sadli, 1971). Dualism theories presuppose a division of economic and social structures across distinct sectors, with each sector having its own organizational structure, level of development, and goal frameworks (Boeke, 1953). The absence of relationships between people of different races, religions, and languages, which is in many cases a legacy of colonialism, is a consequence of social dualism, according to this idea. Economic, technological, and regional dualism are also consequences of social dualism.

As an example, South Africa's agricultural industry is dualistic, consisting of a sophisticated commercial farming sector (dominated by white farmers) coexisting with a huge number of small-scale and mostly black and disadvantaged farmers. This concept of "dualism" is a valuable method of explaining the agricultural sector in South Africa, both in terms of comprehending the economics of the sector and in terms of planning integration and integration. An informal or emerging sector is described as being dependent on a formal sector

that is well established as well as on government involvement to integrate the two sectors into a single system. There are a variety of analytical reasons why this dualism concept is still relevant today, including the relationships between growth and income distribution, as well as in explaining both historical and prospective country development experiences, as well as its relevance to contemporary economic modelling efforts in general.

The framework for interpreting this research study which is geared towards evaluating the challenges face by black crop farmers is based on:

- Access to fund by small-scale crop farmers.
- Access to land by small-scale crop armers; and
- Access to education and training by small-scale farmers.

2.7 Summary of Literature Reviewed

This chapter sheds light on the state of the state of agriculture in South Africa and the challenges of small black crop farmers in south Africa. It went further by describing the study area or site. In all these, a problem analysis was done in general. More importantly, several literatures have been reviewed bringing out their subject matter as against others, their methodology and findings and results. The research gaps were identified, and a losing mechanism suggested. It wraps up with the conceptual framework explaining how the results of the research will be interpreted or explain.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter elucidates the approaches and procedures that were utilised over the course of the research in order to accomplish its goals. The introduction to it, the research approach and research design, the research procedure and methodologies, and the limitations of the research are presented at the beginning of the chapter.

3.2 Research strategy or approach

A research approach, also known as research strategy, is a broad outline of how the researcher intends to respond to the study questions (Saunders eta l., 2009). According to Genot et al. (2018), the research strategy also offers the general direction of the study, aswell as the procedure by which the research is done (2003).According to Saunders et al. (2009), and acceptable research strategy must be chosen based on the research questions and objectives, the quantity of current information on the topic area to be investigated, the time and resources available and the research's philosophical foundations.

This section explains why certain processes or approaches were utilised to locate, select, and analyse materials relevant to the understanding of the research topic, allowing the reader to critically assess the study's overall validity and dependability. The main questions: How will the data going to be collected or generated? In addition, how will it be analysed (Genot et al., 2018)?

Three research approaches are discussed below and then the most suitable research method for this research is chosen and justified.

Qualitative research approach is highly appropriate for questions where pre-emptive reduction of the data will prevent discovery (Atieno, 2009), hence they are good at simplifying and managing data without destroying complexity and context. Even said, qualitative research relies greatly on the researchers' abilities and skills, but the results may not be considered dependable because they are based primarily on the researchers' own personal judgments and interpretation. Qualitative research has the advantage of being acceptable for small samples, but it also comes with the risk that the findings could be interpreted as representing the views of the general public (Bell, 2005).

Conversely, quantitative methods use various forms of experiments and surveys as their main strategies of inquiry. The purpose generally is to identify if a cause-and-effect relationship exists, and then to make generalisations about the relationship in the context of a broader population.

While quantitative and qualitative approaches oppose each other, another research method, (Mixed Methods Research) which has arisen out of the "paradigm wars" maintains a neutral position. MMR (Mixed Methods Research) is a methodological technique based on philosophical principles. Methodological assumptions influence the gathering and analysis of data, as well as the incorporation of both qualitative and quantitative data in a single study or set of studies. According to this theory, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods yields better results than either method on its own (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Additionally, Driscoll et al. (2007) attest that mixed methods research helps in getting a complete review of both the survey responses and statistical analysis and also provides a complete review segregated in patterns

of responses. Greener (2008) also observes that one of the reasons for combining the techniques is for 'triangulation' where different methods of data collection and analysis will both enrich and confirm the picture of a situation.

3.2.1 Qualitative Research Approach

Qualitative approach is chosen for this study because it provides a level of insight that is difficult to obtain from a closed-ended questionnaire survey. Without fear of being criticised, respondents are free to express their experience, ideas, and feelings. Qualitative research provides a dynamic approach to study by allowing the researcher to follow up on respondents' replies in a real-time, resulting in crucial dialogue around a topic - something that quantitative lacks. a structured survey does not allow. While the data and statistics provided by quantitative research are unquestionably valuable, you may find yourself wondering why the numbers are the way they are. This is where qualitative research comes in handy, because respondents have a lot of questions. As Albert Einstein put it "Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted".

In a similar study, "Farming against the odds: an examination of the challenges facing farming and rural development" by Nel and Davies (2019), the same qualitative method was applied. The goal of the study was to look at the challenges facing farming and rural development. Through this they were able to find out that black farmers faced more challenges than their white counterparts.

3.3 Research design

The entire approach for conducting research that defines a brief and logical plan to address established research questions through the collection, interpretation, analysis and discussion of data is

referred to as research design (Claybaugh, 2020). The procedure and methods used in the design of a research was determined by the researcher's viewpoint on the nature of knowledge (Wright et al., 2018).

Bryman (2012) states that the criteria used to evaluate social research are referred to as a study design. Hence, it is a framework for generating evidence that is appropriate for a specific set of criteria as well as the study issue under consideration. As a result, he came up with five research designs which became Bryman's (2012) five generic research designs which are: experimental design, cross-sectional or survey design, longitudinal design, case study design and comparative design.

Therefore, for this study a case study has been chosen as the most appropriate research strategy. According to Saunders et al. (2009), a case study is a strategy for doing research, which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence. Hence, the case study approach fits well with the intent of this study, which seeks to evaluate a real-life phenomenon (the economic challenges of black crop farmers) through a variety of data collection methods.

In a similar work by Aliber and Hall (2012), they adopted the same case study research design. In their study of the support for smallholder farmers in South Africa using the same study area as a case study, they were able to find out in general that government support to smallholder famers have been costly and ineffective. Through this study design, they were able to use just a sample and then study the whole o south Africa and brought up a result which

was applicable to the nation as a whole.

3.4 Research Procedure and Methods

3.4.1 Research data and information collection instrument(s)

The overarching goal of data collection is to obtain high-quality information that answers all of the questions that have been posed. The devices or instruments used to collect data, such as a paper questionnaire, interview agenda or a computer-assisted interview system, are referred to as data collection tools. Checklists, interview schedules, surveys or questionnaires, observations laboratory experiment, quasi-experiment, scales, archival documents, and more are all used to collect data.

The interview agenda or schedule is favoured because it gives a way for respondents to reply to the questions posed in the research (Anso, 2014). The choice of interview schedule is based on its accessibility and capacity to cover a large number of respondents in a region despite the fact that different approaches such as focus groups and observation can be used to obtain data. If the purpose of this research is to gather information from the participants in an organisational and individual setting, the way the participants experience economic and other challenges in their crop farming, the meaning they attach to it, and how they interpret what they experience, the researcher therefore finds it ideal to use method like interview agenda schedule as it allows for discoveries and will do justice to the perceptions and the complexities involved in interpreting the data analysis results.

Data collection instruments structure in research defines the way in which questions are asked to gather relevant information to answer the research questions and achieve the research objectives (Thomas

et al., 2018). They could be structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Only closed-ended questions are included in structured questionnaires and interview schedules. Open and closed-ended questions are included in semi-structured questionnaires and interview schedules. Open ended questions make the up the majority of unstructured questionnaires.

Open-ended interviewing allowed the researcher to ask respondents for their thoughts, which resulted in a deeper grasp of the topic. As a researcher, the author of this study feels that interviews can provide a deeper insight of the social phenomena being examined than can be gained using quantitative methods, such as surveys. Therefore, interviews on the other hand will provide detailed insights from individual participants in order to substantiate the data collected through the questionnaire.

Nel and Davies (2019) used similar data collection instruments of interview schedule to study black and white farmers in South Africa. They were able to collect qualitative data to describe the challenges and constraints of black farmers in South Africa. The open-ended interview schedule enabled them to solicit the opinions of the farmers which helped them achieve their objectives. Attached in Annex I are the questionnaire and interview schedule.

3.4.2 Research target population and selection of respondents

3.3.2.1 Research target population

Cooper and Schindler (2003) define population as a group on which the researcher will focus. Ngechu (2004) puts forward that a population is a set of people, services, elements, group of things, or households that are being investigated. The population of interest for this study is black crop farmers Mpumalanga. According

to Statistics South Africa Census of Commercial Agriculture Report published in March 2020, the total number of farmers in Mpumalanga is 2823 of which 5% are black crop farmers. This makes the population of interest to be an estimate of 141 black crop farmers in Mpumalanga. In a similar work by Aliber and Hall (2012), they used similar population of the same province to study support the challenges of supporting smallholder farmers. This population was chosen to provide a basis for sampling to undertake the study. It made it possible for the researchers to answer their research questions and achieve their objectives. This target population establishes a clear direction for the research's scope, aim as well as the data kinds. It defines the characteristics of the people who are eligible for the research. For estimating sample size, the scope of the whole population is provided.

The interview agenda schedules were administered on black crop farmers. The 141 black crop farmers in Mpumalanga province were sought to have a very good response rate. Most of these farmers are young people between the ages of 18 to 40.Most of them have farming experience and in a better position.

3.3.2.2 Selecting of respondents from the target population

Given that the population of interest is an estimate of 141 and 15 of them were sampled given time and resource constraints. These 15 sample farmers were selected from farming organisations so that their opinions and perceptions will reflect their farming groups. This ensured a more representative sample. The selection of these 15 respondents from the population was done using purposive sampling based on the contents; coding and thematic analyses that were made in the course of the study. The participants were selected based on their knowledge and experience and relevant information based on

their opinions and perceptions will be solicited.

Nel and Davies (2019) used similar technique of selecting participants. They studied black and white farmers in South Africa. They were able to collect qualitative data to describe the challenges and constraints of black farmers in South Africa.

3.4.3 Ethical considerations when collectingresearch data

The moral standards that guide researchers in conducting and reporting research without dishonesty are known as research ethics (Rensik, 2020). It is critical to follow ethical principles when conducting research in order to ensure the validity of a study. A published scientific study may be retracted if misconduct is discovered. Furthermore, any work based on the findings would be dismissed.

It is essential to adhere to ethical standards and the dependability of data produced in all research endeavours (Anso, 2014). All ethical guidelines were observed and adhered to throughout this study's course of conduct. An ethics clearance certificate from the institution was received prior to data collection and may be seen in Annex III.

Before any data was collected, the farmers" organization had to give consent. Those that took part in the study did so voluntarily, and they were given the option to opt out at any time. Prior to taking part in the study, all participants will be required to sign a consent form. It was made clear to all participants that their comments would be kept private and anonymous at all times. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured at all times by not requiring participants to include their names on the survey or by encrypting

their responses. There was no way to identify any of the people who took part in the study because all of the data was kept strictly confidential. Additionally, the information gathered was solely used for academic research to meet the requirements of the master's degree, and nothing else was done with it.

3.4.4 Research data and information collectionprocess

Datta collection is a method of collecting observations or measurements in a methodical way. Participant's observation or ethnography, interviews, focus group discussion, and documents review are all used in research to acquire primary data. Interviews were utilised to conduct this research. Interview is generally a qualitative research technique which involves asking open-ended and closed-ended questions to converse with respondents and collect elicit data about a subject. Therefore, the open-ended interview schedule enabled the researcher to solicit the opinions of the respondents. For the purpose of this study, the researcher believes that interviews provided more understanding of the social phenomena being studied than would be obtained purely from quantitative methods, such as questionnaires. Therefore, interviews will provide detailed insights from individual participants.

3.4.5 Research information processing and analysis

3.3.5.1Research information processing

The procedure of turning raw data into meaningful statements after data collection involves data processing, data analysis and data presentation. Data processing entails a variety of operations that are required to prepare data for analysis. The manipulation might be manual or computerized. Editing, classifying open-ended questions, coding, computerisation, and table and diagram preparation are all part of the process. The objective of data processing is to clean the data and reduce it to acceptable form for analysis.

For this purpose of this study, which is qualitative study, interviews were done with the farmers, thematic analysis of the interviews were done, they were coded, and SPSS was used to do the qualitative analysis using charts. The process of reviewing and adjusting gathered survey data is known as data editing. Data editing aids in the development of rules that eliminate bias and provide consistent estimates, resulting in a clear analysis of the data. The process categorising data according to the study issue or topic and the research methodology is known as coding. During this procedure, the researcher assigned a code to each item, such as male - M, female - F, to indicate gender in the questionnaire or interview schedule without writing complete spelling. Data entry is a method of filling in a huge table of codes using a computer application or software. Each column in the table represents one field, and each row or line represents one responder or questionnaire. Data cleaning which is also part of the process, is the detecting and correcting of mistakes and inconsistencies in a data collection or database that have arisen as a result of data corruption or incorrect entry. Data that is incomplete, incorrect, or irrelevant is recognised and updated, amended, or removed.

3.5 Research Weaknesses

Some of the drawbacks of qualitative study including it being less important like quantitative studies, its inability to allow for generalisation of findings and subjectivity are all drawbacks that one must look at. Administration of open-ended interview agenda could lead to so many opinions and perceptions which do not add up.

Since this is a study of the black crop farmers in Mpumalanga province. Mpumalanga province which holds only 2823 farmers about 5%o which are black crop farmers totally to 141.this may not

necessarily reflect the millions of black crop farmers in the country. This, therefore, may in turn negate finding a trend and a meaningful cause and solution to these black crop farmers. Hence the need for future research on this area to cover those aspects that the researcher missed out on. In addition, Covid-19 was a limiting factor to accessing most of these farmers.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 was a discussion of the research methodology employed. This chapter presents a structured view of the gathered data, addressing the research objectives as well as the research questions with reference to the literature reviewed and the methodology employed. It presents the results of the analysis done.

4.2 Response Rate

That target sample was 15 black farmers in the regions and districts concerned. The table below shows the characteristics off the sampled famers:

Table 2: Profile of sampled farmers

Farmer	Type of crops	Scale/Profile
1	Maize	Small scale commercia
2	Grain	Small scale commercia
3	Soybeans	Small scale commercia
4	Groundnut	Small scale commercia
5	Sugarcane	Small scale commercia
6	Wheat barley	Small scale commercia
7	Soybeans	Small scale commercia
8	Groundnut	Small scale commercia
9	Sugarcane	Small scale commercia
10	Wheat barley	Small scale commercia
11	Maize	Small scale commercia
12	Wheat barley	Small scale commercia
13	Soybeans	Small scale commercia
14	Maize	Small scale commercia
15	Soybeans	Small scale commercia

The administered interview agenda schedules were done with 15 black farmers. This accounted for 100% response rate. Thus, the study did not suffer a non-response bias. The 100% response ratewas attributed to the fact that the respondents had served their farming organisations for a period not less than 6 years and were on site.

Therefore, this implies that the respondents understood the value of this study and also because of the clear and easy to understand interviews.

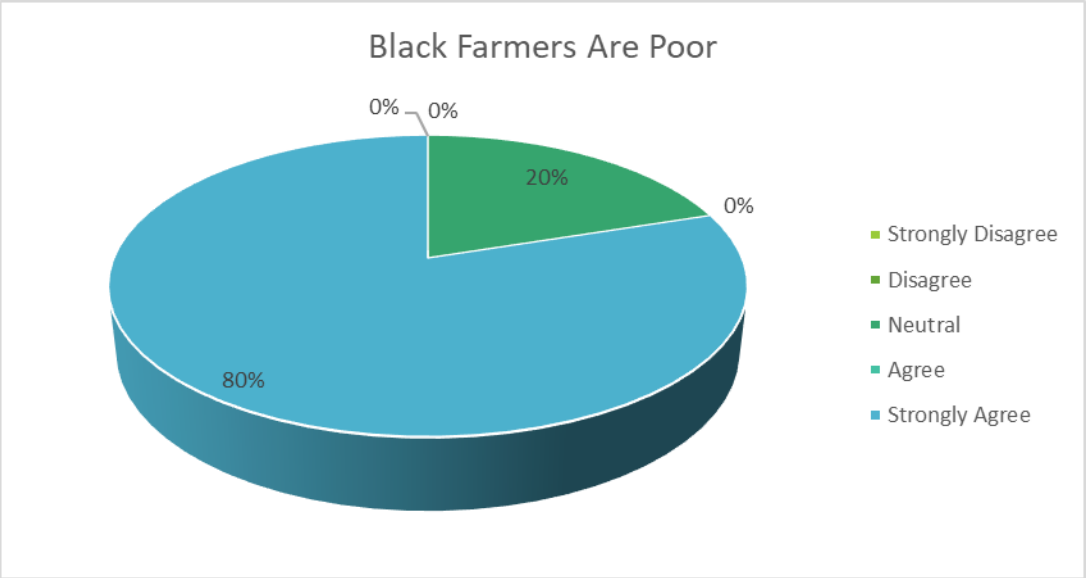
4.3 Thematic Analysis of the Interview Agenda Schedule

To perform this exercise, interviews data was gathered from the interviews with the farmers and then coded for qualitative content analysis of the interview responses. In addition, documents were also provided by the interviewees to substantiate their responses and content of those documents were also coded and analyse. These qualitative analyses were done to address the research questions. Below are the results of the analysis in line with the research questions.

Theme 1: To what extent are black farmers well-off?

To address the research questions, the interviewees were asked questions that were related to their (black farmers) welfare. These questions were intended to solicit black farmers' views and perceptions regarding their welfare. The main question was "What is the economic condition of black farmers? As indicated in the graph below, 80% of the farmers interviewed strongly agree that their economic condition was depriving. One in particular responded "Our economic condition is not good because we do not have enough land to farm and limited support from government." The responses are summarised on the graph below:

Figure 1: Economic Status of Black Farmers



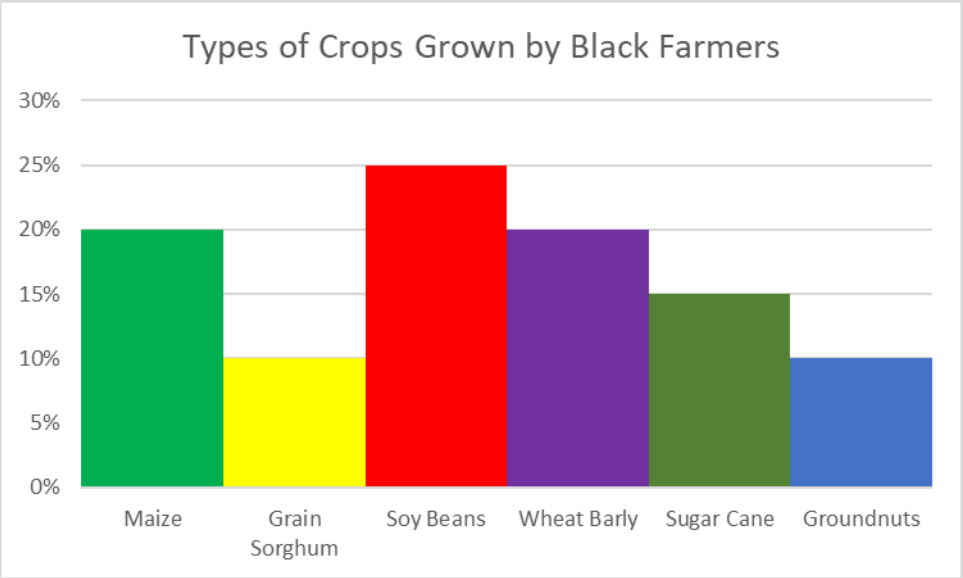
Source: Author's construction using interview data

The analysis of the result indicates that 80% of the interviewees responded agreed that black farmers are poor. 20% were neutral, could not agree or disagree. The interviewees confirmed that the current land and financial regulations do not favour black farmers who make up more than 70% of the farming population. This result is in line with that of Nel and Davies (2019) who found out in their study that black farmers in South Africa generally live in poor conditions.

Theme 2: What types of crops are black crop farmers growing?

15 black farmers were interviewed about the types of crops they grow in Mpumalanga province. They provided their farming data and the figurebelow show the type of crops they had grown in percentages.

Figure 2: Crops Grown by Black Farmers



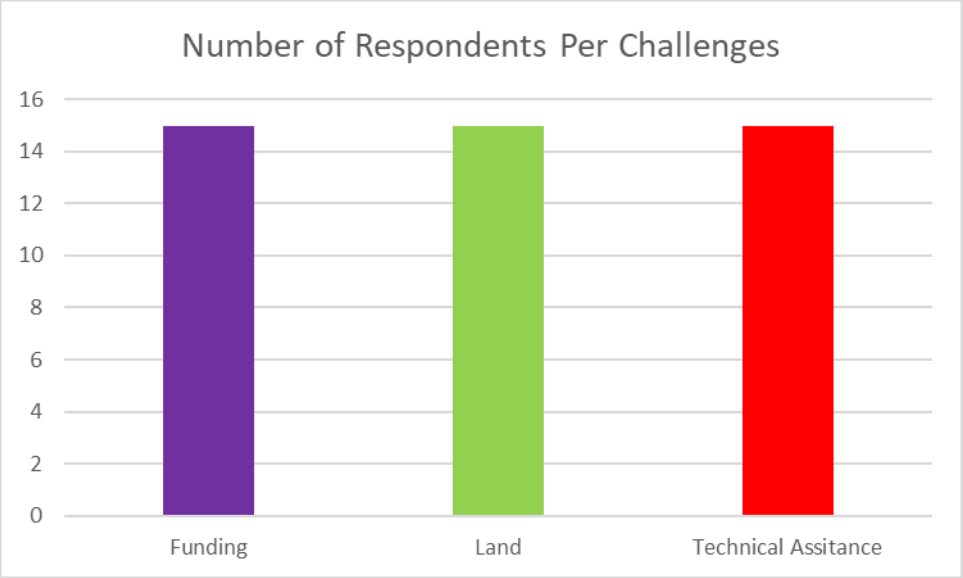
Source: Author's construction using interview data

The figure above shows that soybean was the highest grown crop in the province with 25% followed by wheat barley, and maize, 20% each, sugar cane, 15% grain sorghum and groundnuts 10% each. This is in agreement with Khoza et al. (2019) in their study of black farmers in the province. They noted that maize, grain sorghum, soybeans and sugar cane were the main crops grown in the province.

Theme 3: What are the challenges facing black crop farmers?

In the interviews, the 15 interviewees were asked about the major challenges facing black crop farmers in the province. They explained that the major challenges they face are land, funding and technical assistance from the government and other partners. In verbatim quote, one response was "My main challenge is inadequate land to farm". The other was "I do not have access to finance to improve my farm". Another response from one of the fifteen farmers was "We do not have access to agricultural technical assistance". The table below shows the number of interviewees.

Figure 3: Challenges Faced by Black Farmers



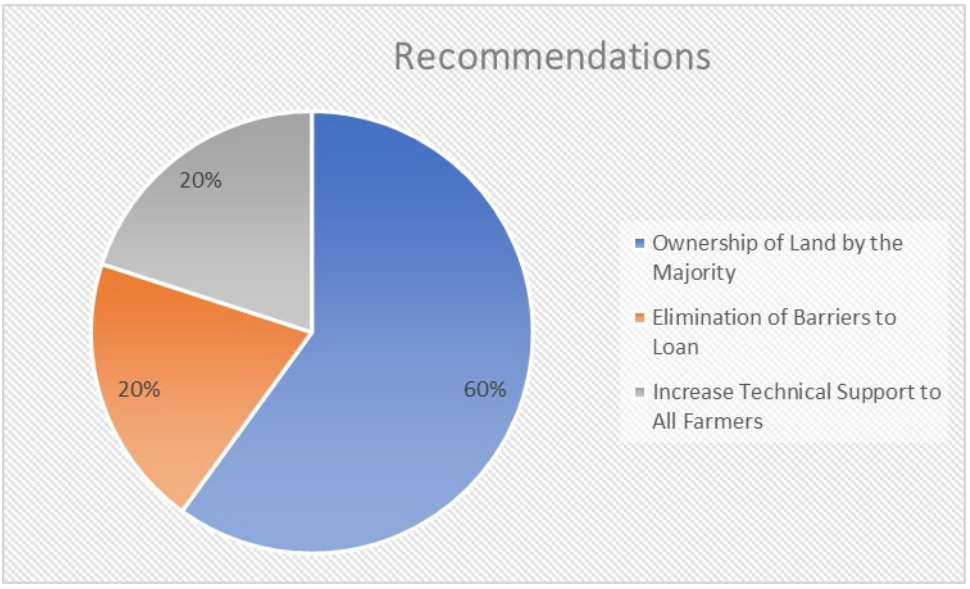
Source: Author's construction using interviews data

All 15 of interviews agree that the 3 challenges of land, funding and technical assistance are all very important and limit their farming activities and keep them poor. They explained that they have in adequate farmlands, funds and technical assistance and that all are important because I you have land you may need funds to farm and that you may need technical support also. This result matches that of Aliber et al. (2009).

Theme 4: What are the Possible Remedies?

In order not to draw recommendations which are strange or notin line with the farmers who are affected by the challenges they face; the study went further to ask these farmers about their take on the potential solutions to their plight.one of the farmers responded, "We need access to land which will lead to access to finance". In the interview, the farmers explained that access to adequate farmlands is a prerequisite for farm loans. They explained that without land, farm loan is impossible. Another farmer responded, "We need technical support to help boost our crop production". A summary of their major responsesis shown in the figure below.

Figure 4: Recommendations



Source: Author's construction using interviews data

The chart above shows that 60% of the farmers interviewed agreed that ownership of land by the majority is one of the main solutions to the challenges faced by black farmers. 20% agreed that elimination of barriers to agricultural loans and increase technical support are also another solution to the challenges ace by black farmers. These recommendations were also put forward by Mokose (2014).

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 was a presentation of the findings and results of the study. This chapter provides conclusions and recommendations derived from the study. Limitations of research are also discussed in this chapter. Final thoughts and suggestions for further research round out the chapter.

5.2 Conclusions

The study which evaluates the difficulties faced by black crop farmers in Mpumalanga Province has derived meaning to the research questions. It was established from the data analysis, that, black crop farmers are poor and could not maintain a good standard of living. This brings a lot of challenges to the country, the economy and the agricultural sector given that black crop farmers make up the majority of farmers in South Africa.

The results of the data analysis also suggest that black crop armers grow a variety of crops with maize, wheat and beans being the most dominant. The implication is that these crops could be adequately produced if these farmers farm at optimum level. These crops are also food and cash crops which could guarantee food security in the country and also flow of foreign exchange from export.

Finally, it is possible to conclude from the statistics that the obstacles faced by black crop producers in Mpumalanga Province exemplify the traditional challenges that have dogged the achievement of land reform, black access to finance for agricultural projects, and government technical assistance. These three challenges have tripartite relationship in the senses that access to farmland facilitates access to agricultural finance and government technical support. As a result, land is at the centre of importance.

The study also reveals that black crop farmers are in dire need off

land reform to give access to land for majority farmers. It also indicates the need for equal access to agricultural funds and technical assistance.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, astute diagnosis of the conditions of black crop farmers in South Africa is needed. This study has, using a case study of Mpumalanga Province has shown that black crop farmers are poor. A broader study into all the other provinces of South Africa needs to be done for effective actions to be taken to address the poor conditions of black crop farmers in South Arica.

It is also recommended that the Ministry of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development should liaise with black crop farmers farming organisation. The types of crops they produce are both food crops and cash crops. Adequate government intervention will ensure maximum output and hence food security and export revenue.

Furthermore, it is also recommended that the Ministry of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural development and the government in general, should undertake land reform to ensure availability of land to the majority black farmers. This will give them access to agricultural finance and technical assistance.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

One limitation of the study is that it only covered one out of the nine provinces in South Africa. The circumstances may be similar, but the realities could be at different scale. In addition, a sample size of fifteen black crop farmers from a given province is relatively small. The farming population is over a thousand in the entire province.

5.5 Direction for Future Studies

Future studies on black crop farmers in South Africa need to look into the interplay or nexus of a relationship between access to farmland, agricultural finance and technical assistance to farmers. These three variables are related and must be explored for comprehensive analysis of the challenges black farmers are facing.

Even though the findings are in line with similar studies, future studies could look into issues of inferences due to causalities that are limited in this cross-sectional study. Furthermore, future studies could also look into focusing on the country as a whole in order to have holistic evidence of the study.

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