

**Enhancing Women Entrepreneurship in the Agricultural Sector within
the KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa**

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ABSTRACT

The research aimed to explore the multifaceted aspects of enhancing women entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector in the dynamic KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa. The investigation explored the role played by women in the sector, challenges they face and potential strategies to foster their empowerment and success. A qualitative research approach was adopted for the research. The research engaged with 20 women entrepreneurs actively participating in agricultural pursuits within the KwaZulu-Natal Province.

This research reveals that women-led agricultural enterprises contribute to the socio-economic landscape of KwaZulu-Natal. These women-led enterprises also emerge as crucial drivers to poverty alleviation, creation of job opportunities, and ensuring food security within households. However, persistent challenges pose hurdles to their endeavours, including limited access to resources, social and cultural barriers, limited education and skills, lack of information, and limited access to markets. .

While government support initiatives have been put in place, the research emphasizes that lack of skills, which is a crucial factor, remains inadequately addressed. The research puts forth a number of recommendations including on-farm training programs, coaching or mentorship initiatives, and training workshops. All these factors are identified as integral components of intervention strategies.

KEYWORDS

Women entrepreneurship, agricultural sector, food system, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

DECLARATION

I, Nokubonga Happy Zondi, declare that the research report “Enhancing Women Entrepreneurship in the Agricultural Sector within the KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa” is my own work. It has not been submitted for examination or any degree in any other university. It is submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration. I further declare that I have properly acknowledged all sources of information used in this research.

Signature: _____

Signed at _____ **Durban - KZN** _____

On the 28 day of February **2024**

DEDICATION

To my dearest twin sister, Bongekile Zondi

Your presence in my life is a cherished gift, and dedicating this work to you is a small token of my immense gratitude for your love, encouragement, and inspiration.

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This research is a culmination of the collective efforts and support of the following individuals, and I am sincerely grateful for the role each one has played in making this achievement possible.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

DALRRD – Department of Agriculture Land Reform and Rural Development

FAST - Feminist Agrifood Systems Theory

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

IDC - Industrial Development Corporation

ILO - International Labour Organization

MAFISA - Micro-Agricultural Financial Institutions of South Africa

NDP – National Development Plan

PIC - Public Investment Corporation

REC - Research Ethics Committee

SDG - Sustainable Development Goal

SEDA - Small Enterprise Development Agency

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of purpose

This research explores various aspects that could enhance the prospects of women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector in South Africa, with a focus on KwaZulu-Natal Province.

1.2 Background of the research

According to Neema and Kalitanyi (2023), agriculture plays a fundamental role in the economic advancement and well-being of people in developing nations. The authors further suggest that the sector has the potential to create jobs, alleviate poverty and uplift people's living standards. Projections by Serraj and Pingali (2018) indicate a significant increase in the global population, expected to reach 8.6 billion by 2030 and 9 billion by 2050. This population growth is accompanied by a shift in dietary preferences towards higher quality food, necessitating greater resource allocation for production. These insights underscore the urgency and importance of enhancing the prospects of women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector (Patil & Babus, 2018).

The movement of individuals from rural to urban regions is also observed, primarily driven by economic growth and structural changes. Serraj and Pingali (2018) estimate that by 2040, over 50% of the African population will reside in urban areas. This transformation in economic growth, urbanization and structural transformation presents an opportunity for the agricultural sector, especially smallholder farming, to become integrated into the agri-business value chain. On the other hand, these trends pose obstacles, such as the exclusion of small farms as they lack resources to meet the urban and agri-food industry needs (Serraj & Pingali, 2018).

South Africa's agriculture sector is characterized by a dualistic structure. On the one hand, there are many small-scale and subsistence farmers who typically have limited access to resources. On the other, there are few large commercial farms, which account for the majority of the nation's agricultural output (Materechera & Scholes, 2021). The dualistic

structure of the South African agriculture sector has historical roots, including the legacy of apartheid policies that led to the limited number of large-scale commercial farmers owning the majority of land. As a result, small-scale farmers encounter substantial entry barriers, including access to land, financing, and markets (South African Government, 2012).

According to Dzingirai (2021), entrepreneurship emerges as a potent tool for alleviating poverty in both developed and developing nations. Despite the widespread recognition of entrepreneurship's role in fostering economic growth and mitigating poverty (Bhuiyan & Ivlevs, 2019), little attention has been given to agricultural communities. As far as Dzingirai (2021) is concerned, the above is surprising considering that agriculture is the main driver for sustainable rural development. Drawing from these discussions, this research aims to understand the mechanisms by which women entrepreneurship can be enabled to attain full capabilities and competitiveness within the agricultural sector in KwaZulu-Natal.

1.3 Research problem

According to Patil and Babus (2018), in all regions of developing countries, women play a crucial role in agriculture and economic activities, particularly in rural areas. Visser and Wangu (2021) further suggest that in the food production system, women's roles vary from direct producer, wage worker to unpaid worker on a family farm. Despite their crucial role in the agricultural sector, International Labour Office (2017) argues that women in several developing nations experience inferior levels of economic and social empowerment, greater restrictions to labour markets as compared to their counterparts in developing countries, as well as lack of support in human capital. Due to gender differences, Mohammadi and Shafi (2017) hold the view that women frequently have insufficient access to basic business information and knowledge about investment opportunities than men. Furthermore, in many rural communities, women who aspire to become entrepreneurs face difficulties in accessing training and entrepreneurship development services. This research contributes to the enhancement of women entrepreneurs in agriculture. The research has significant implications for various

stakeholders in the agricultural industry, including policymakers. The findings of this research also provide valuable insights for both existing and aspiring women in the agricultural business.

1.4 Objective of the Research

The primary objective of this research is to understand the mechanisms by which women entrepreneurship can be enhanced to attain full capabilities and competitiveness within the agricultural sector in KwaZulu-Natal.

1.4.1 Sub-objectives

The sub-objectives of the research are to:

- i. Examine the contribution and role of women in the agricultural sector within KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.
- ii. Identify the limitations experienced by women entrepreneurs operating in the agricultural sector within KwaZulu-Natal

1.5 Research questions

The research seeks to answer the following questions:

- i. What is KwaZulu-Natal's performance in the agricultural sector?
- ii. What is the contribution of women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector?
- iii. What are the main challenges encountered by women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector?

1.6 Rationale

Visser and Wangu (2021) argue that traditionally, men have been viewed as the primary food producers and have focused on cash crop production. However, within the food system, women assume a pivotal role, serving as the primary food providers and the main caregivers in the household (Visser & Wangu, 2021). According to Ijatuyi et al. (2022), entrepreneurship remains crucial in developing countries. However, it has been observed

that entrepreneurial activities in South Africa have decreased in comparison to other developing countries. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor survey, South Africa's entrepreneurial performance is poor in comparison to other nations. This is a concerning issue as entrepreneurship plays a vital role in creating employment opportunities, boosting production, expanding markets, and revitalizing communities (Ijatuyi et al., 2022).

In many countries, women improve economic diversification, boost growth and income equity. However, this is not the case in African countries, where women are unable to realize their potential for self and economic empowerment. Gender inequality remains a persistent issue in South Africa, and as a result, women entrepreneurs remain largely marginalized from various activities and production factors such as land ownership, credit accessibility, skills development, and educational opportunities (Ijatuyi et al., 2022). Therefore, this research is critical and relevant in identifying the barriers that limit women participation in the South African agricultural sector, with the aim of enhancing women entrepreneurship.

1.7 The delimitations of the research

- i. **Geographical delimitation:** The research focuses only on women entrepreneurs already operating in the Kwazulu-Natal agricultural sector.
- ii. **Data collection delimitation:** The research draws on insights from primary data collection involving face-to-face interviews with women entrepreneurs in KwaZulu-Natal agricultural sector.
- iii. **Sample size delimitation:** The research was confined to 20 participants who took part in the interviews.

1.8 Definition of terms

1.8.1 Agricultural sector

The agricultural industry encompasses businesses whose primary operations involve cultivating crops, raising livestock, and capturing fish and other organisms from farms, ranches, or their natural environments (Patil & Babus, 2018). South Africa's agricultural sector is among the most diverse globally, with a mix of intensive and extensive corporate and private crop farming systems that yield vegetables, fruits, grains, nuts, and other products (Materechera & Scholes, 2021).

The South African agricultural sector has been recognized for its focus on vegetables and cattle production. However, in the post-apartheid era, it underwent a notable diversification, encompassing additional commodities such as fresh fruit. This expansion has resulted in the increase of foreign investment, improvement in the local export sector, easier access to finance by start-ups and job creation (Kanayo, 2021).

1.8.2 Women Entrepreneurship

Neck et al. (2019) define entrepreneurship as a way of thinking, acting and being able to create or find opportunities and further act on them. Dzingirai (2021) defines entrepreneurship as a series of steps that entail introducing novel ideas and generating innovative products or services with the aim of generating income for the entrepreneurs while simultaneously enhancing the well-being of the community. In line with these definitions, Baral et al. (2023) view women entrepreneurs as individuals who undertake the responsibility of coordinating and overseeing their business resources, while also bearing all related risks with the aim of achieving profitability.

1.8.3 Food system

A food system is an intricate network of processes that includes the creation, processing, transportation, and consumption of food by humans (van Berkum et al., 2018). Thus, it entails the interrelated value-adding activities that play a role in the cultivation, collection,

processing, distribution, consumption, and disposal of food products obtained from agriculture, forestry, or fisheries. These activities are part of the broader economic, social, and natural ecosystems in which they function (van Berkum et al., 2018).

1.9 Chapter Outline

The research report comprises of six chapters, broken down as follows:

Chapter One provides a comprehensive overview of the research underlining the background information of the topic, explaining its significance and relevance, as well as identifying the research questions. Additionally, the chapter presents limitations or assumptions and defines critical concepts used in the research.

Chapter Two provides a literature review on women entrepreneurship within the agricultural sector. The chapter begins with an overview of the performance of the agricultural sector in KwaZulu-Natal. It then focuses on the contribution of women entrepreneurs to the agricultural economy and the challenges limiting their participation. Additionally, this chapter introduces the conceptual and theoretical frameworks relevant to the research.

Chapter Three describes the methodology employed to address the propositions derived from the literature review. The chapter elaborates on the research design, approach, data collection methods, and ethical considerations employed to address the research questions.

Chapter Four presents the findings of the research by providing some insights from the interviews with women entrepreneurs.

Chapter Five discusses the research findings of the research in line with the literature review.

Chapter Six summarizes the entire report by deducing findings from the research report to address the research questions. It also provides recommendations for enhancing women's participation in the South Africa's agricultural sector.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The agriculture sector is significant in the South African economy, as it makes a substantial contribution to economic growth, poverty alleviation, and food security (Matsane & Oyekale, 2014). There are debates about the sector's role and direction in the African continent. Louw et al. (2017) hold the view that there are two main issues fuelling food insecurities at a global level. The first emanates from the fact that Africa has the largest proportions of unexploited agricultural land remaining on the planet. Second, the rapidly rising population, which is projected to reach nine billion by 2050, growing at its fastest rate in the next three decades. Serraj (2018) suggests that sustaining increasing population and its food demands require an even faster increase in food production. Moreover, Dzingirai (2021) indicates that greater attention should be given to entrepreneurship, shown to be an effective means of addressing agricultural production, particularly in developing economies.

This chapter pays particular attention to women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector. The research is geared towards exploring various aspects that contribute to enhancing the prospects of women entrepreneurs. The chapter starts by defining women entrepreneurs in terms of demographics and their role in the agricultural sector. This is followed by an in-depth review of constraints faced by women in the agricultural sector. Lastly, an examination of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks pertaining to women entrepreneurship is presented.

2.2 Definition of women entrepreneurs in the agricultural context

A woman entrepreneur is defined as a female who actively engages and adapts to the financial, socio-economic, and support systems within society, thereby playing an engaging and dynamic role (Chinomona & Maziriri, 2015). Haimid et al. (2016) share a similar perspective by defining a woman entrepreneur as someone who has established a business independently or with other women, or an individual who holds a leading role

in a family business or partnership, or as a shareholder who also manages a publicly held company. According to Hendratmi et al. (2022), women entrepreneurs participate in all facets of entrepreneurship, taking on risk and identifying opportunities in their environment to merge resources in innovative ways that improve the profitability of their ventures. Hendratmi et al. (2022) further reveal that more women venture into entrepreneurship with the goal of achieving work-life balance and contributing to their communities.

According to Patil and Babus (2018), women are currently engaging in various roles in the agricultural sector, including independent farming, unpaid family farm work, and paid or unpaid labour on other farms and agribusinesses. Haimid et al. (2016) highlight that historically, the agricultural sector has been dominated by men. Meyer (2018) adds that in the past, men were occupied with economic pursuits and public affairs, while women were expected to assume domestic responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning, and taking care of children. Women were subject to limited or no education and were deprived of the right to vote or participate in decision-making processes. Even the minority of women who were allowed to work were typically hired for menial jobs such as domestic service or manual labour, which offered little pay and often involved difficult working conditions.

2.3 Overview of the agricultural sector in the KwaZulu-Natal Province

According to Kabini (2022), the agricultural sector in South Africa experiences a yearly growth rate of 2.6% and makes up approximately 8% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Furthermore, the sector generates 13% of the country's gross export earnings. In terms of agricultural production, key commodities in the region include maize, fruits, tubers, roots, beef, and milk (Kabini, 2022). According to Mdlalose (2016), KwaZulu-Natal boasts a larger expanse of high-quality agricultural land among all provinces in South Africa, establishing itself as a national leader in the production of diverse agricultural commodities.

According to StatsSA (2022), KwaZulu-Natal contributed 10.5% to the sale of goods and services in 2021. In terms of salaries and wages within the agricultural sector, the

province ranked second highest, contributing 12.1%. Similarly, it secured the second highest position in terms of employment, with a contribution of 13.1%, following Western Cape. StatsSA's data also reveals that out of the total 18 million households in South Africa, 7.6 million (42.1%) are headed by females. KwaZulu-Natal is the second largest province in terms of female-headed households, with an estimated 1.5 million people (48.3%) residing in the province (StatsSA, 2022).

2.3.1 Demographics of women entrepreneurs in the KwaZulu-Natal agricultural sector

Women entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector has drawn significant attention and is estimated to become a highly productive sector in the near future (Kanayo, 2021). According to Patil and Babus (2018), women farmers comprise over a quarter of the global population. In addition, the average representation of women in the agricultural workforce in developing nations is 43%, with variations from 20% in Latin America to 50% in Eastern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

According to Kanayo (2021), South African statistics reveal that females constitute over 50% of the current population. However, women only own 34% of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the country. This indicates a relatively low number of female entrepreneurs compared to their male counterparts. Recent data from USAF (2022) suggests that South Africa and other low middle-income countries have seen 17% of women actively involved in entrepreneurship, while an additional 35% express aspirations to venture into entrepreneurial pursuits.

Mdlalose (2016) emphasizes that the population of the KwaZulu-Natal province is predominantly composed of women and children who heavily rely on subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods. However, despite this demographic scenario, there remains a significant gender disparity in agricultural-owned enterprises within KwaZulu-Natal (Loubser, 2020). Female representation in these enterprises stands at a mere 22%, while male representation accounts for 78%. This data underscores the existing challenges and disparities faced by women in establishing and leading agricultural enterprises in the region.

2.3.2 Proposition 1

With KwaZulu-Natal possessing significant proportions of untapped agricultural land, there exists a vast potential for boosting food production to cater to the needs of its swiftly growing population. Women, being integral contributors in the agricultural sector, could have a pivotal role in unlocking this potential.

2.4 Contribution of women entrepreneurs in agriculture

The impact of women entrepreneurs in Africa is significant as they are playing a crucial role in driving the continent's economic growth through job creation, wealth generation, poverty reduction, and innovation promotion (Ojong et al., 2021). Additionally, Kanayo (2021) notes that women entrepreneurs are also playing a critical role in South Africa's agricultural sector, which is essential to the country's economic development and job creation. Hendratmi et al. (2022) and Loubser (2020) add that women entrepreneurs play a crucial role in managing family finances, and their income has a more significant impact on their households and communities than men.

2.4.1 Poverty alleviation

According to Dzingirai (2021), poverty can be described as a lack of ability to achieve fundamental capabilities such as having sufficient nourishment, living a healthy lifestyle, and possessing the necessary skills to participate in social and economic initiatives. A significant challenge that African countries face is poverty, particularly in rural regions. Despite efforts taken to address poverty in line with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), a large proportion of rural inhabitants in African nations continue to reside below the poverty threshold (Dzingirai, 2021).

Mdlalose (2016) highlights that engaging in agricultural activities to grow crops for subsistence or income not only alleviates poverty, but also creates the potential to earn income. Serraj and Pingali (2018) alludes that globally, more than 2 billion people depend on smallholder agriculture. Building upon this assertion, Mdlalose (2016) suggests that agriculture can significantly contribute to poverty reduction at different levels, including

rural, urban, and national. This can be achieved through three primary approaches: (a) reducing food prices, (b) creating job prospects, and (c) increasing real wages and augmenting farm earnings.

2.4.2 Job creation

Agriculture is the primary economic activity in the rural regions of the country and is projected to generate approximately one million employment opportunities by 2030 (Mdlalose, 2016). StatsSA (2022) defines the employment rate as the proportion of people with jobs in relation to the working age population. Based on a trend analysis of employment rates in South Africa spanning from 2017 to 2022, the national employment rate exhibited a gradual decline, dropping from 43.7% in 2017 to 37.3% in 2022.

Kabini (2021) reveals that the agri-business sector accounts for the majority (90%) of the leading employment opportunities in South Africa. Furthermore, since the sector has the potential to generate both direct and indirect employment opportunities, an increase in agricultural productivity will impact labour markets and rural wage rates, which in turn, can affect the supply side of the non-farm economy in rural regions.

2.4.3 Food security

The government of South Africa has prioritized food security as a critical component of its poverty eradication strategy. Agriculture has been identified as a crucial aspect of the country's efforts to achieve food security (Mdlalose, 2016).

FAO (2018) defines food security as the state in which individuals have consistent access to safe, nutritious, and adequate food that satisfies their dietary requirements and personal preferences, empowering them to maintain good health. According to van Berkum et al. (2018), the global population will increase to 9 billion by 2050, with the most substantial population growth expected in regions that already face challenges with food insecurity. van Berkum et al. (2018) suggest that should the present practices persist, a 50% increase in food production would be necessary to meet the demands of the expanding population.

2.4.4 Proposition 2

Given the challenges of poverty, particularly in rural regions, and the potential of agricultural activities to alleviate poverty and generate income, empowering women entrepreneurs in agriculture could be a key strategy for sustainable development.

2.5 Constraints to women entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector

According to Chinomona and Maziriri (2015), challenges refer to obstacles that impede business operations, requiring significant mental effort to overcome. These challenges can create inefficiencies and prevent their businesses from operating effectively.

Haimid et al. (2016), argue that the agricultural industry has traditionally been male-dominated, posing obstacles for women entrepreneurs who encounter a shortage of female role models to guide and mentor them. Women entrepreneurs face limited opportunities to showcase their capabilities in a sector that remains predominantly dominated by men. Kanayo (2021) further establishes that women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector encounter numerous constraints that impede their ability to initiate, sustain, and expand successful businesses. These challenges encompass gender and cultural discrimination, insufficient financial resources and assets, restricted business networks, lower social status, and greater domestic responsibilities. Consequently, this leads to lack of confidence to enter a sector predominated by men.

2.5.1 Gender differences or stereotypes

Women in South Africa still face gender inequality, which hinders their ability to access equal rights and opportunities as men, making it challenging to thrive as entrepreneurs (Ijatuyi et al., 2022). According to Wang et al. (2020), societal gender roles create differences in social capital, which affect the decisions of individuals to start and expand businesses and their success rates.

As pointed out by Neema and Kalitanyi (2023), these stereotypes are reinforced by rules, regulations, and values, which create obstacles for women to access the necessary

resources to maintain and expand their businesses. Furthermore, Haimid et al. (2016) suggest that these perceptions result in the public being less confident in women's ability to give their best effort in their chosen field.

Serraj and Pingali (2018) argue that in societies where social norms restrict female mobility, male migration tends to be more prevalent. This results in women taking on the role of farm managers. While this can potentially empower women by providing them with control over the production process, it can also negatively affect productivity in settings where they have limited access to resources. Serraj and Pingali (2018) further elaborate that restricted access to resources, such as credit and land, may eventually lead women to migrate alongside their husbands as a means of escaping these limitations.

2.5.2 Lack of financial Resources

According to Raghuvanshi et al. (2017), the shortage of financial resources is another impediment to women's entrepreneurship. This results in a lack of willingness to take risks, limited business growth, decreased financial rewards, high rate of business closure and a reduced inclination to participate in entrepreneurial initiatives. Materechera and Scholes (2022) highlight access to adequate capital as crucial for supporting farming systems and driving agricultural production. Moreover, as much as agriculture sector has the potential for job creation, contribution to GDP and economic development, financiers and investors still perceive it as a high-risk investment area. This perception, coupled with discriminatory practices, has made it challenging for agricultural entrepreneurs to access the capital required to expand their businesses at the desired pace (Kanayo, 2021).

Women farmers generally lack the necessary management and absorptive capacities needed to utilize financial and productive resources (Njobe, 2015). Additionally, the physical location of farms and the distance from credit sources is another significant obstacle to accessing finance. The distance between borrowers and lenders can affect the borrower-bank relationship, making it harder for rural dwellers with limited education and little access to financial services to secure funding (Njobe, 2015).

2.5.3 Lack of Education and Training

According to Chinomona and Maziriri (2015), entrepreneurship education and training is essential to equip individuals with the skills to become self-employed and self-sufficient, fostering creativity and innovation in identifying business prospects. Amaechi (2016) identifies lack of skills and education as one of the significant obstacles that hinders the progress of entrepreneurs, thereby limiting their ability to access available resources, expand, and thrive economically. This also hinders their ability to identify market gaps that could facilitate diversification and enable them to capitalize on market opportunities.

Raghuvanshi et al. (2017) highlight the significance of equipping women with essential skills necessary to overcome cross-cultural obstacles and confidently engage in entrepreneurial ventures. The lack of knowledge and skills related to entrepreneurial management results in women focusing on micro or small businesses, which are typically less profitable. According to Kanayo (2021), achieving success in entrepreneurship requires a combination of various essential factors, including proficiency in technical skills, competency in business management skills, and strong personal skills.

2.5.4 Proposition 3

In light of the obstacles encountered by women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector, it is necessary to adopt a holistic and multi-faceted strategy to tackle these hurdles that hinder their capacity to initiate, maintain, and expand prosperous enterprises.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

Feminist Agrifood Systems Theory (FAST) is a theoretical framework designed to promote the advancement of women's entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector. By utilizing FAST, the research takes a comprehensive approach to promote gender equality, empower women by involving them in various aspects of the agricultural value chain, and foster collaborations with multiple stakeholders to address food insecurity. This approach acknowledges the significance of women's autonomy, gender disparities, the

local context and their valuable contributions towards ensuring food security in the KwaZulu-Natal region.

2.6.1 Feminist Agrifood Systems Theory (FAST)

The FAST theoretical framework focuses on examining the involvement of women farmers in agriculture. It acknowledges the challenges they face and their efforts to establish their presence in building sustainable agricultural communities (Sachs et al., 2016). By recognizing the historical marginalization of women in agriculture, the FAST framework establishes a link between past experiences and present initiatives to actively engage women in the sector. Furthermore, the theory provides solutions and recommendations to enhance women entrepreneurs' role in the agricultural sector. These solutions aim to address the obstacles they encounter and promote their advancement within the industry (Sachs et al., 2016).

There are six key principles that form the basis of the FAST. These principles include:

- (a) Promoting gender equality in agriculture,
- (b) Asserting the identity of female farmers,
- (c) Pursuing innovative approaches to accessing land, labour, and capital resources,
- (d) Integrating environmental, economic, and social values in food and farming systems,
- (e) Negotiating the roles of women in agricultural organizations and institutions, and
- (f) Establishing new networking organizations for female farmers (Sachs et al., 2016).

2.6.2 The relevance of Feminist Agrifood Systems Theory to the research

FAST aligns with the research purpose, which is to understand the mechanisms by which women entrepreneurship can be enabled in the agricultural sector in South Africa, specifically in KwaZulu-Natal. This theory recognizes and explores the active involvement of women in agriculture while addressing the challenges they face in accessing crucial resources for their farming activities. Kanayo (2021) highlights self-doubt and lack of confidence experienced by women entering the traditionally male-dominated agricultural sector. Considering these factors, the application of FAST is a

suitable framework for this research. Moreover, the framework examines the transformative changes occurring in the agricultural sector, the increasing participation of women in sustainable agriculture, and the strategies they employ to overcome obstacles within agricultural communities. Overall, this theory provides a pathway for enhancing women's roles and opportunities within the agricultural sector.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

According to StatsSA (2022), women empowerment refers to the capacity of women to make decisions and have control over resources that affect their quality of life. Kidder et al. (2017) define economic empowerment as women's ability to handle financial affairs, own property, participate in market activities, access job opportunities, and be involved in economic decision-making processes. By integrating the framework of women empowerment, the research offers valuable insights into enhancing the prospects of women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector in South Africa.

Anderson et al. (2021) highlight that the empowerment of women can result in economic advantages not only for women, but also for their households and communities. Similarly, Ijatuyi et al. (2022) concur that empowerment plays a critical role in reducing poverty, which is considered a major objective of development assistance.

Kidder et al. (2017) propose a women empowerment framework consisting of three domains: economic, social, and political (see Figure 2.1 below). According to StatsSA (2022), women empowerment is crucial in addressing the enduring impacts of apartheid and fostering transformation within the South African society. This entails a fundamental restructuring of power dynamics among individuals, institutions, and laws.

According to the framework, women's economic, personal, social, and political empowerment are interconnected. The framework also reveal that progress in one dimension is unlikely to be sustainable without advances in the others, as illustrated in Figure 2.1.

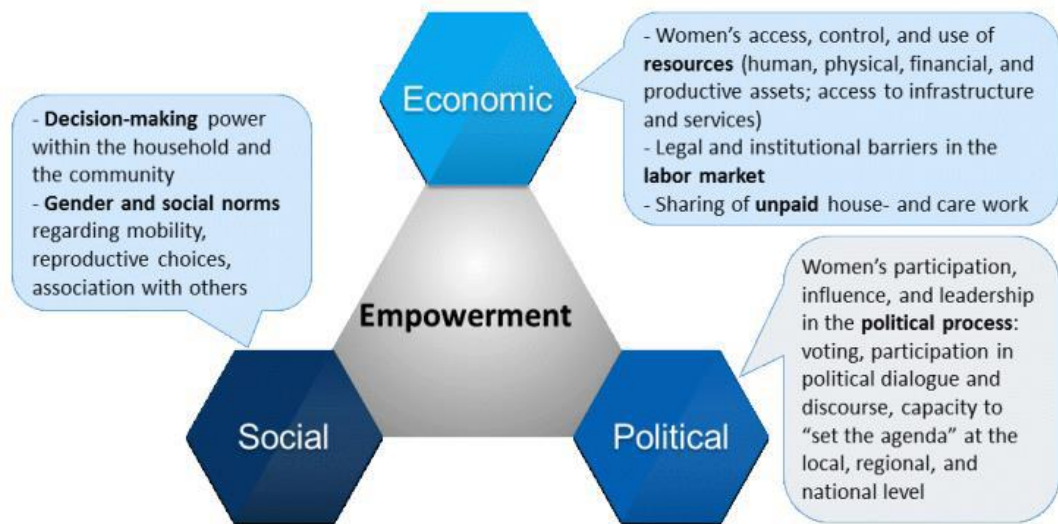


Figure 2.1: Women empowerment framework (Kidder et al., 2017).

The framework indicates that through economic empowerment, women can gain equal opportunities to enter the workforce, achieve financial independence, and attain positions of economic influence.

Social empowerment indicators assess the extent of women's representation in decision-making and evaluate societal attitudes towards gender norms. This pillar further suggests that there should be changes in cultural norms that regard women as inferior to men and the provision of education opportunities for women. The political category refers to women's right to vote, as well as their representation in politics at the local, provincial, and national levels. Political participation enables women to advocate for policies and initiatives aligned with their beliefs. Indicators for assessing political empowerment encompass the representation of women in governmental roles and their involvement in electoral processes across local, provincial, and national levels (Kidder et al., 2017).

2.7.1 The relevance of women empowerment framework to the research

The framework depicted in Figure 2.1 aligns with the research's focus on women entrepreneurship and empowerment in the agricultural sector. Farm Credit System

Financial (2015) research findings highlight historical disparities faced by women, including their exclusion from decision-making processes and limited representation in the sector. Traditionally, the agricultural industry has been male dominated, with minimal representation of women.

The women empowerment framework emphasizes the importance of enabling women to acquire and control productive resources while recognizing their significant participation as economic actors. It underscores the goal of enhancing women's status, rights, and opportunities within agricultural activities. This involves equipping women with the requisite knowledge, resources, skills, and support to actively partake in agricultural endeavours, participate in decision-making processes, and thrive within the agricultural value chains. The ultimate aim of women empowerment in the agricultural sector is to promote gender equality, eliminate discrimination, and empower women to have more control over their lives, resources, and income generation.

2.8 Chapter summary

This chapter examined the agricultural sector in KwaZulu-Natal, focusing on the role of women. While these women head a significant proportion of households, they face challenges in enterprise ownership. Despite their potential contributions to job creation, poverty reduction, and food security, women encounter barriers such as limited access to finance and skills, as well as cultural biases. Theoretical frameworks like Feminist Agrifood Systems Theory (FAST) and women empowerment provide strategies to overcome these obstacles and enhance women entrepreneurship in agriculture. The next chapter outlines the research methodology, providing a concise overview of the steps and procedures employed for data collection and analysis to ensure validity and reliability of the findings.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology utilised to answer the research questions of the report. The chapter includes a discussion of the research tools utilized for data collection and analysis in relation to enhancing women's entrepreneurship in the agricultural industry in the KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa. The section on data collection methods explains the type of data, the tools utilized, and the sampling techniques employed, including the criteria used to select the sample. Furthermore, this chapter explore the data gathering procedures and outlines the data processing and analysis methods employed.

3.2 Research approach

There are various research approaches including qualitative, quantitative and mixed research methods. Asenahabi (2019) posits that qualitative research seeks to understand the social reality of the subjects by studying them in their natural settings, to explain why those subjects behave the way they do. Rahman and Muktadir (2021) view quantitative research as involving the use of computational techniques to analyse numerical data obtained through various means such as online or offline surveys, polls, questionnaires, or pre-existing statistical data. Mixed research methods are a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods within a single study (Ramlo, 2019). This research adopted a qualitative approach to explain how women entrepreneurs operate in the agricultural sector in KwaZulu-Natal.

3.3 Research design

According to Ramlo (2019), research design is a structured plan or model developed to address research questions and to minimize variability. Babbie (2001) explain that it guides both the research methodology and approach. This research applied a descriptive research design. According to Leavy (2017), this design describes a phenomena that already exists in the most accurate manner as possible. Thus, unlike the experimental

design where a certain period is required to observe the selected subjects, the required data is readily available, awaiting collection and analysis by the researcher in descriptive research design.

The descriptive research approach was chosen in this research because it is a fact-finding investigation of different kinds undertaken through a survey (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). In keeping with this line of thought, this research sought to understand how female entrepreneurs in the KwaZulu-Natal agricultural sector could be empowered amidst the numerous challenges they face. Their perspectives on how these challenges can be addressed was also sought to have a better understanding of their lived experiences. In descriptive research, the researcher is expected to only explain what happened on the ground without necessarily having control over any of the variables. Aggarwal and Ranganathan (2019) further suggest that descriptive research is very easy to conduct, often inexpensive, quick and requires minimal effort.

3.4 Population and sample

3.4.1 Population

The term "population" refers to the complete set of people, events, or things that the researcher intends to study (Hennink et al., 2020). It encompasses the group of individuals, events, or objects of interest for which the researcher aims to draw conclusions based on statistics derived from a sample (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). For this research, the population was women entrepreneurs, particularly those operating in the KwaZulu-Natal agricultural sector.

3.4.2 Sample and sampling method

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), a sample is a portion of a population or universe. Sampling refers to the method of selecting an adequate number of appropriate elements from a population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). By studying the sample and comprehending its characteristics or properties, it became possible to generalize those characteristics or properties to the elements of the population.

Respondents for this research were selected using a purposive sampling technique. As outlined by Sekaran and Bougie (2016), purposive sampling is a technique where the researcher deliberately chooses participants who possess specific attributes or experiences that are pertinent to the research question. The goal is to identify and recruit participants who can provide rich and diverse data to enhance the research findings. This research sought to identify individuals possessing specific knowledge, abilities, or experiences that are relevant to the research.

The information was sourced from 20 participants through face-to-face interviews. Hennink et al. (2019) argue that in qualitative research, any number of participants between 5 and 24 is adequate to attain saturation. Saturation occurs when interviewing one more participant adds no new usable perspective or information (Vasileiou et al., 2018).

The participants interviewed were categorised as follows:

- Female entrepreneurs who were business founders;
- Female entrepreneurs who had transitioned from informal to formal sector operations, or were in the process of formalizing their operations.
- Women in joint business ownership and directly involved in the day-to-day management of the entrepreneurial activities.

Age was not a factor, as long as the aforementioned conditions were met. The identified participants were limited only to those who were available and willing to participate in the research.

3.5 The research instrument

In accordance with McGrath et al. (2019), an interview guide was used as the data collection instrument, containing both closed- and open-ended questions. Based on the objectives of the research, closed-ended questions solicited information that addressed the objectives of this research, such as explaining the agricultural sector's performance in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, assessing the involvement of women entrepreneurs in

the sector, and identifying the challenges that impede their ability to achieve maximum potential. Open-ended questions were included in this research to capture any missed information and to enable participants to elaborate on their responses and provide suggestions.

Furthermore, the interview guide consisted of clear questions written in a simple language without any jargon, to ensure that all participants understood and respond to all questions (Volden, 2019). An interview guide is attached in **Appendix A**.

3.6 Procedure for data collection

As previously mentioned, primary data was collected through face-to-face interviews, using a semi-structured interview guide. Permission to conduct the research and access to the database of women entrepreneurs was obtained from the KwaZulu-Natal, Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD). The permission letter from the department is attached in **Appendix B**. Prior to conducting the interviews, approval was sought from the chosen participants, and their preferred interview dates were confirmed. Upon receiving consent, the interviews took place in venues chosen by the identified participants and during their preferred times to avoid disturbing their routines and schedules, as advised by Siedlecki (2022).

Gray et al. (2020) argue that each interview should also be as brief as possible to avoid the participants getting bored and losing interest. On these grounds, each participant was not interviewed for more than 30 minutes. Only the selected participants who signed consent forms were interviewed. In addition, the presence of the interviewer meant that all questions were clarified, thereby ensuring that the participants fully understood and answered them accordingly. The research also recognized and accepted Jain's (2021) suggestion that the direct nature of face-to-face interviews facilitated good discussions between the interviewer and participants. The interviewer had an opportunity to observe facial expressions, body language, and other non-verbal signals, which would not have been possible in non-contact interviews.

3.7 Quality Assurance

Adequate attention was given to ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings. As defined by Nowell et al. (2017), trustworthiness in qualitative research indicates the degree to which the findings are as close to the actual reality as possible, thus warranting the readers' attention. By adopting this definition, the researcher secured the quality of the findings through application of the five criteria for trustworthiness suggested by Stahl and King (2020), namely credibility, confirmability, transferability and authenticity.

3.7.1 Credibility

The credibility aspect of qualitative research is concerned with establishing the researcher's confidence in own research findings (Chin et al. 2021). In other words, it seeks to close the gap between reality and what the researcher understands to be true. Moser and Korstjens (2018) argue that it establishes if the data that the researcher obtains from the research participants is a correct and true interpretation of their actual views.

One of the most recommended methods of improving the credibility of qualitative research found in the existing body of knowledge provided by Evans et al. (2023), is through preregistration of the research. These researchers regard preregistration as a research process that involves specifying all the details of the project, including the data collection and analysis methods, the hypotheses to be tested, and all other critical analytical decisions made prior to the start of the research. Consequently, this research adhered to the same process and clearly outlined the research methods and procedures before commencing the research.

3.7.2 Confirmability

Chin et al. (2021) defined confirmability as the extent that other researchers could confirm the findings of a research. Moser and Korstjens (2018) suggested that the confirmability of research findings could be achieved by utilizing various data sources and methods, a process Stahl and King (2020) referred to as data triangulation. Tuval-Mashiach (2021) further emphasized that all collected data should be safely kept in a manner that is well-

organised, and available for retrieval in future when needed if the research findings are questioned. Therefore, following the completion of the research, the confirmability of the research findings was ensured by creating and continuously maintaining an audit trail of the collected data and by triangulating the data with findings from similar studies.

3.7.3 Transferability

In the view of Tuval-Mashiach (2021), a good research is one whose findings apply to different other contexts. Even though the researcher may not know which sites may wish to transfer the findings, Nowell et al. (2017) argue that it is still the researcher's responsibility to offer in-depth descriptions of own research to give whosoever wishes to transfer the findings to their own site adequate information to determine its transferability. In accordance with this advice from Nowell et al. (2017), the transferability of the research findings was ensured by providing a detailed, rich description of the settings studied. This included the various methods used to collect primary data, along with the timeframes for data collection. Furthermore, all these methods were not only described fully but were also justified, as suggested by Stahl and King (2020).

3.7.4 Authenticity

Motulsky (2021) defined authenticity in research as denoting the way research findings contributed to the field by being genuine, deserving of attention and credible. Adding to this definition, Webber-Ritchey et al. (2021) concurred that the researcher should pursue authenticity without losing the original interpretive voices of the participants. This research ensured authenticity of its findings through using the participants' direct narratives to accurately capture the various realities whilst collecting, analysing and interpreting data.

3.8 Data analysis strategies and interpretation

The collected data was captured on an Excel spreadsheet for analysis. Responses to qualitative data from open-ended questions were grouped according to the similarity of

themes and patterns, then coded before being captured on an Excel spreadsheet for analysis. The research adopted the coding process, as outlined by Sekaran and Bougie (2016). This process involved identifying and categorizing ideas, concepts, behaviours, interactions, incidents, terminology, or phrases found in interview notes, documents, or field observations.

3.9 Ethical considerations

3.9.1 Ethical clearance

Prior to commencing with the process of data collection, the researcher obtained ethics clearance from the University of the Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical). The ethics clearance certificate is attached in **Appendix C**.

3.9.2 Participant Information Sheet

After obtaining ethics clearance, the researcher issued participant information sheets to each identified participant, clearly outlining what the research was all about, the participants' role, and the processes to be followed in collecting the required information. In addition, these sheets clearly explained the participants' right to withdraw from the research at any given time without any consequences suffered. The participation information sheet is attached in **Appendix D**.

3.9.3 Consent

Klykken (2022) emphasizes the importance of consent in research. Researchers should only collect information from participants who willingly and officially consent to participate in the research. On these grounds, consent letters were issued to each identified participant, signed, and returned to the researcher prior to data collection commencing. Additionally, a written consent was read out to such participants so that all participants consented to the same thing. A sample of the consent is attached in **Appendix E**.

3.9.4 Confidentiality of participants

In accordance with Goodwin et al. (2019), each response sheet was numbered, with pseudonyms or codes also used by the researcher to represent the participants and protect their identities. Only the researcher was able to link the real names of the participants to their respective pseudonyms and codes. Furthermore, the researcher also indicated to the participants that after 5 years, all hard copies would be shredded.

3.10 Chapter summary

This chapter described several key aspects of the methods used in seeking, obtaining, and analyzing the required information to respond to the set of research objectives. It explained the number and type of participants the research obtained information from. Data collection tools and procedures were explained in detail for quality assurance purposes and to ensure the credibility, confirmability, transferability and authenticity of the research findings. Additionally, this chapter discussed how the collected data was processed, analyzed, and presented in line with qualitative research approaches. The chapter also discussed ethical considerations such as obtaining the consent of participants prior to the commencement of data collection, obtaining ethical clearance from the university, and detailing how the researcher would safeguard the confidentiality of participants. The next chapter presents and interprets the findings of the research.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research results with regard to enhancing women entrepreneurship in the KwaZulu-Natal province agricultural sector. The findings are based on the data collected from the identified 20 participants. The findings cover the distribution of participants; government initiatives and support, perceived role of women in agriculture; skills possessed by the participants and challenges faced by the participants.

4.2 Description of sample

All 20 participants were Black women. The sample in Table 4.1 details the age distribution of participants, education levels, the types of commodities they were involved with, and the duration each participant had spent in the sector.

Table 4.1: Sample distribution

Age group	Number of participants	Education level	Number of participants
21-25	1	No education	7
26-35	6	Matric	5
36-45	5	Diploma	6
46-55	3	Degree	2
>55	5	Other	0
Distribution of participants by enterprise			
Commodities	Number of participants	Number of years in the business	Number of participants
Crop	16	Less than five years	4
Livestock	3	Between five and ten years	7
Horticulture	1	Between 10 and 20 years	3
Crop and livestock	2	More than 20 years	6

4.3. Research question 1 (RQ 1) results

RQ 1: What is KwaZulu-Natal's performance in the agricultural sector?

The research sought to evaluate the performance of KwaZulu-Natal's agricultural sector in supporting female farmers with the necessary inputs to pursue their commodities effectively. It examined how government interventions contribute to the sector's performance, focusing on the ways these initiatives help farmers create jobs and enhance the socio-economic well-being of the community.

4.3.1 Government Initiatives and Support

This research sought to find out if the selected female farmers have ever received any government support in their farming endeavours. It is encouraging to note that of the twenty participants, half (1; 3; 6; 10; 12; 13; 14; 15; 17 and 18) said that they have received financial support from government. These participants mentioned that the financial support was in the form of grants and loans through various state organs such as the Department of Agriculture, under the *Micro-Agricultural Financial Institutions of South Africa (MAFISA)* program and Land Redistribution and Agricultural Development grant, among others. Participant 10 noted that:

“I have received funding from government before, I think seven years ago, in the form of a grant. I used most of that money to acquire an additional piece of land and prepare it for farming by fencing and tilling the land. I had to buy a lot of fencing material and hire people to erect it. Then I hired a tractor and more people to clear the bushes that had grown there before I could start farming. The remaining funds were then used to buy inputs such as seeds and water tanks. Unfortunately, that year my harvest was not good due to unfavourable weather conditions, and this has made it difficult for me to get further funding, as I could not meet my target with my initial funds. Nevertheless, I still appreciate that support as I would not have managed to do what I did in my new farm without that funding.”

Participant 6 said that:

“I recently qualified for a loan through the MAFISA program in 2021. I also think the fact that I have a Diploma, which helped me to write and provide a proper written business plan and other documents, contributed towards me getting my application approved.”

The other ten participants (2; 4; 5; 7; 8; 9; 11; 16; 19 and 20) were yet to receive some form of funding. Nevertheless, some of them continued operating successfully with their limited resources, further proving their desire to succeed.

4.3.2 Job creation

All participants were asked to indicate the number of employees they have and whether they are permanent or temporary appointments. Four of the participants (8, 9, 11 and 19) did not have any employees. Upon further probing, it was revealed that of these participants, three of them (participants 8, 9 and 11) were new in the business and had been operating for less than five years. As such, they had not accumulated enough resources to help them afford hired employees. Participant 8 shared that:

“I am only 22 years old and am just starting to find my feet in the sector. I therefore do not have the capacity and ability to hire anyone yet but the plan is to definitely hire people as I will not manage to operate by myself since the farm will grow soon.”

Participant 11, who is 62 years old, mentioned that:

“I am only raising a few chickens which are not too demanding in terms of labour. Therefore, I can manage on my own, with the help of my kids and grandkids. We only keep a number of birds that we know we can manage to avoid hiring outsiders.”

Meanwhile, participants 9 and 19 said they joined the farming sector to address poverty. Therefore, they could not afford to hire employees. They further indicated that whenever they had more labour-intensive activities such as weeding, clearing, planting and harvesting, they either asked other family members residing nearby to assist or used what they called “*ilima*”. *Ilima* is a Zulu word referring to labour exchange. During *ilima*, each host family would supply food and beverages, such as “*umqombothi*” (traditional beer fermented from sorghum or maize) and “*maheu*” (a non-alcoholic beverage), in exchange for group farming. During *ilima*, participants alternate work on each other's farms.

The research found that at least fourteen participants had between one and ten employees. Important to note is the fact that all of these employees are temporary, hired only during certain labour-intensive seasons such as land preparation, weeding and harvesting. There was a common reason for using temporary employees, which had to do with limited financial resources to afford permanent employees. Participant 20 said that:

“I am involved in the production of seasonal crops such as maize. I honestly do not see any need to hire people to manage these crops on a daily basis as I rely on nature for water and do not irrigate. I do not use herbicides and pesticides either, so why would I have permanent employees? Whenever I need extra labour I call my 10 temporary staff for a specific task and pay them a task-based salary before releasing them. I have never needed more than ten people at any time in my farm.”

In the case of participants 1 and 3 who had seven and ten employees, respectively, argued that hired labour was more dedicated and efficient than unpaid family members or neighbours assisting as part of *ilima*.

Three participants (10; 12; 18) had more than ten employees each. Of these three, only participant 12 strictly hired thirty temporary staff. Participant 10 has thirty temporary and six permanent staff, whilst participant 18 has six permanent and six temporary staff members. When asked to explain their staff numbers, Participant 10 mentioned that:

“I am involved in both crop and livestock production and therefore required thirty employees to efficiently manage both enterprises. For example, around twenty-eight participants are involved in crop production, especially land preparation, weeding and harvesting. Furthermore, during harvesting time, I use some of them to go around the villages and town selling my produce. The same applies with my livestock enterprise in which I use three-hired labour for vaccinating, deworming and selling my animals on a regular, but less frequent basis. The permanent six help in both enterprises and are the ones that determine when and what type of assistance is required in the form of temporary labour.”

When asked to explain why they chose hired staff when others were relying on exchange labour, all the three participants with more than ten labourers indicated that their businesses were big and thus required dedicated and adequately skilled people to carry out their assigned tasks. They mentioned that most of these tasks, including weeding and harvesting, had a direct bearing on the quality of crops harvested and the subsequent price in the formal market. As such, they saw it necessary to hire people who were not only adequately skilled but also motivated by the financial reward for their labour, instead of food and alcohol, as is the case with exchange labour. Thus, motivation in their businesses should be complemented with the necessary skills which some family members did not possess, hence the need to hire strangers for the sake of efficiency.

4.4. Research question 2 (RQ 2) results

RQ 2: What is the contribution of women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector?

Women entrepreneurs play a pivotal role in shaping the agricultural landscape of KwaZulu-Natal. Their multifaceted involvement spans various domains, from crop cultivation to livestock management. In this section, the research explores their substantial impact, emphasizing on expertise, skills, and best practices that drive their productivity and yield outcomes.

4.4.1 Perceived role of women in agriculture

Participants were asked to share views on their role as women in the sector in KwaZulu-Natal. These perceptions were captured under three categories, namely (i) important; (ii) indifferent; and (iii) not important.

Of the twenty interviewed participants, thirteen (13) thought their role as women in the agricultural sector was very crucial, despite their lack of adequate support. For example, participant 1 said:

“I have been in the farming business for over 20 years. Yes, I have encountered several challenges as a woman along the way but I can safely tell you that I am so proud of what I have achieved on my own, in my own farm. I know that there are several other female famers who are much better than me in the province and country at large. To answer your question, as women we do play a very critical role in the sector because we are able to feed our families and also supply fresh produce to our respective communities at affordable prices compared to formal markets, which are far from people’s homes.”

Participant 12, who had been farming for over 20 years, indicated that:

“One of the reasons for my involvement in and dedication to my farm is that South Africa does not have enough job opportunities at the moment, especially for the youth. I have three kids who all migrated to Gauteng to seek employment several years ago but they remain unemployed even now. Through my farm, I have taken over the responsibility of feeding them, together with their kids whom I stay with. I know of several other women in my community who are raising their families through agriculture, with no males around to assist. I would, therefore, say, without us women stepping in through agriculture to close the gap left by migrant males, most families would starve to death.”

Five participants had indifferent views on the role of women in the agricultural sector. This response was a direct result of frustration fuelled by lack of support more. Participant 13 narrated that:

“I have been in the business for almost 10 years now but no one in government has ever acknowledged my efforts. In fact, I produce the same crops as white commercial and black male farmers, yet I do not even get any support or invited to farmers’ events organized by government. I am sure this is due to my gender as a female and not because of my inability to produce the same quality as the farmers I have mentioned. It is for this reason that I maintain that I am indifferent on our role in the sector as women because our efforts are neither recognised nor recorded.”

The remaining two participants thought their role as women in the agricultural sector was not that important. However, this was not because they lacked confidence in their own abilities, but their views were driven by the high number of challenges they had to overcome for them to play a more meaningful role in the economy. In other words, these participants felt they had the necessary potential to drive the agricultural sector, as smallholders, with adequate support. Participant 16 mentioned that:

“I do believe with all my heart that with my academic qualification, a university degree in agriculture, energy and dedication, I can make a difference in my farm business as a woman just like any male or white farmer. However, thus far all my efforts are thwarted by the fact that I am a female and we face more challenges than males even in the simplest of things such as applying for funding because my role is deemed as being limited to the kitchen. I even struggle to get additional land because I am a woman and thus do not have any collateral in my name. How then can the world expect us women to prosper when existing in such a world of inequality?”

The same sentiments were shared by participant 20 who revealed that she failed to expand her farm because the tribal authorities in her locality were openly biased towards males when allocating land. Therefore, she felt this was the fate for many other aspiring black female farmers across the country, as government puts no effort to correct this unfair bias.

4.4.2 Skills possessed by the participants

Success in every field requires a broad range of skills, and the farming sector is no exception. To effectively traverse the obstacles that it offers, the agriculture industry requires a special blend of technical, managerial, and practical skills. It is for these reasons that this research sought to find out the types of skills acquired by the participants. The responses are presented in table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Skills possessed by the participants

Skill	Number of participants	Participants
Financial Management	12	1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 7; 10; 12; 13; 15; 16; 18
Business Management	13	1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 13; 15; 16
Marketing	17	1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 13; 14; 15; 16; 17; 18
Agro-processing	1	18
No training	2	19; 20

As illustrated in table 4.2, there are four categories of skills as identified by participants, namely, financial management; business management, marketing and agro-processing. While participants 19 and 20 did not possess any of the skills identified, some participants had acquired more than one of these skills. The researcher asked participants to mention the specific skill they had each acquired, when it was acquired, the institution where they acquired the skills from and the importance of these skill in the agriculture business.

Financial management: Twelve participants possessed this skill. Most of these participants acquired the skill through local colleges and on a part-time basis. According to participants, the advantage of having this skill is that it helped them with their budgeting and record keeping tasks. Participant 4 said that:

“I acquired the skill through a Financial Management module, which I did at university as part of my degree at a local university in 2017. I think the skill is very important for me and any business owner because it assists in forecasting the sales, determining the prices, doing financial statements and budgeting. All these are very important, as they are required when applying for funding. They show the potential funders where my business stands financially and brings them confidence to invest in me.”

Participant 12 shared that she acquired her financial management skills from a local college.

“I used to struggle with balancing my books and this made it very difficult for me to know how much was coming in and going out until a friend told me to study financial management. I did it on a part-time basis since I was also running a business and completed it after 6 months in 2013. Since then, I have been able to keep track of every cent in my business, which is very important considering I hire at least 30 people in my farm. With my skill I can budget their wages, negotiate where necessary and still make a profit each season.”

Participant 18 emphasized the importance of having an understanding of financial management.

“I buy all my inputs in town and sell my produce in town too. I also hire eight part-time employees, in addition to the permanently employed eight and also pay to transport my produce to the markets in town. All these things require money and therefore with the financial management skill that I have, I am able to know how much I spend on each of these and therefore plan my expenses properly. I got motivated to acquire this skill by my bank manager

when I applied for a loan in 2014 and was told of its importance, hence I immediately registered to do it through a local college in 2015.”

Marketing: this skill was the most popular skill possessed by the participants (17). As was the case with financial and business management skills, this too was mostly acquired through part-time studies in local colleges and other recognized formal institutions. Participant 3 indicated that:

“I used to work for a white commercial farmer for almost a decade, assisting with packing and distributing produce to the market. I worked very close to two senior colleagues who were formally qualified in the marketing space and I learnt my marketing skills from them as they mentored me. I never went to any formal institution for purposes of learning marketing. Today I can safely say I know marketing more than most marketing graduates despite not having a formal certificate in the field.”

Participant 13 mentioned that:

“I used to be part of a farming cooperative in my community for some time, until 2015. Within the cooperative, we encouraged each other to have at least one crucial skill to assist the cooperative. Members would then choose their preferred skill and the cooperative would fund its acquisition through a local agricultural college or institution. I chose marketing because I was passionate about negotiating and selling and acquired my marketing skills in 2013.

Agro-processing: Participant 18 indicated that she has acquired this skill, as she was strictly involved in crop production. She recognized the stiff competition she had for her produce from the high number of other local farmers of similar produce. Furthermore, the shelf life of agricultural produce is short by nature and her inability to sell all her produce on time led to loss of income. This is because part of the stock had to be sold at very low prices due to loss of freshness or had to be disposed of completely. This was her biggest challenge for years, until she heard about how agro-processing could be her solution.

Agro-processing not only prolongs the shelf life of her produce but also adds value, thus improving her revenue. According to the participant:

“I attended a training workshop organised by the Department of Agriculture four years ago where I was one of the female farmers taught the agro-processing skill to add value to our produce and make it last longer on the shelves. This was a very important training because it was very practical and suited every individual, regardless of their academic qualification.”

Business Management: Thirteen participants mentioned having acquired this skill to improve their business operations, making it the second most popular skill among the participants.

4.4.3 Further skills required by the participants

Following up on the issue of participants' skills, the research sought to find out if the participants had any specific skills they wished to acquire to improve their businesses. Two key learning areas were uncovered, namely, (i) crop management and (ii) water management. Participants 1 and 11 were interested in poultry production skills.

Crop management: Of the twenty interviewed participants, nineteen were involved in crop production. , and thirteen of these participants identified crop production as a necessary and much needed skill. Considering the fact that nine participants had been in the farming business for over a decade, there is an expectation that they already have adequate crop production skills to make them competitive. Participant 20 argued that:

“Since I produce sugarcane, which is used as a raw material by Gledhow Mill where processing takes place, I think it is very necessary for my produce to be of highest quality to meet the safety standards. The only way I can achieve this is by obtaining proper training in crop production. My current knowledge was obtained informally and through watching or assisting my parents in their own sugarcane farming activities. This knowledge is not enough, especially

in this ever-changing global environment, faced with different crop diseases all the time. I need this training to easily adapt and stay afloat.”

Crop rotation emerged as the biggest required skill according to seventeen of the participants who are not involved in sugarcane production. These participants cited their limited agricultural land, which was negatively affecting their yields, as the key reason for wanting to acquire crop rotation skills. Participant 8 stated that:

“I am new in the farming business but the knowledge that I already have tells me that my farming space is too small for me to continue getting satisfactory yields. At some point all the important nutrients in the soil will disappear and my crops will suffer. I know about crop rotation but I do not know which crop adds what exact nutrient into the soil. I therefore need this skill as a matter of urgency otherwise I will start losing money from poor yields soon.”

While several others shared participant 8’s concerns, there were some who were aware of the importance of using synthetic fertilizers to improve soil quality. However, their financial situation did not permit them to invest in such costly interventions. A specific example was that of participant 12 who mentioned that:

“I am already over the age of 60 and earn a social grant, which is what I use to fund my farming business. This money is not enough at all to steer my business towards success. As for the fertilizers, there is no way I could afford them and still put food on the table from the same social grant money. My only option is either to get funding to afford such inputs or learn better farming approaches that would maximize my yields from the present field space. I have heard that crop rotation and organic farming practices could help me achieve my dream without using a lot of money.”

Other identified cropping skills required for optimum agricultural yields and quality involved understanding soil types, crop varieties, planting methods and pest management. The participants acknowledged the important advisory role played by the local

government extension officers in helping them deal with various crop diseases. However, they cited that these officials were overwhelmed by the amount of work, as they each had to service a very high number of farmers at a time, thus affecting their availability and efficiency. For this reason, the participants felt it would be better if they acquired the necessary cropping knowledge themselves as opposed to relying on the extension officers.

Water management: Fourteen of the twenty participants cited water challenges in their respective farms. These challenges were two-fold, excessive and inadequate water supply. A delicate balancing act was necessary to achieve optimum yields for the farms, thus the need for the relevant water management skills. Participant 10 said that:

“I have a big farming business as seen through the high [36] number of employees I hire each year. However, my biggest challenge is that droughts are very severe here, at times requiring irrigation for certain crops to survive. At the same time, when it rains, our rains cause severe flooding which makes me lose most of my crops. I therefore need to learn relevant skills on how to handle this erratic water situation to maintain a steady income.”

Participant 12 voiced that:

“With me, my main concern is managing natural water so that it does not fuel soil erosion. In other words, I want to learn as much about water, as much about soil erosion, as these two are correlated. Also, as someone planning to irrigate in future so that I utilise my field throughout the year, I have to learn the necessary skills to design and manage my own irrigation systems and avoid relying on expensive engineers.”

In addition to these specific water management skills mentioned by participants 10 and 12, there was a general agreement that knowing how to deal with water-logged soils was crucial. This was particularly crucial during floods as excessive water resulted in the crops

drowning and rotting. With limited ability to control the force of nature, such as floods, the least participants can do is to acquire skills to minimize natural effects on their crops.

Poultry production: As the only two participants involved in poultry production, participants 1 and 11 relayed their need for training, particularly on how to identify, diagnose and treat different poultry diseases. They argued having these skills was very necessary because of the high risk of poultry diseases that necessitated the culling of the entire farmer's birds such as the avian and other zoonotic influenza viruses. These participants felt that learning these skills would help them act swiftly, thus eliminate, or at least, minimize the risk of losses.

4.4.4 Preferred skills training interventions

For purposes of crafting training interventions that speak to the needs and abilities of the participants, it was necessary to ask participants to identify and rate their preferred training methods to help them acquire the skills they lacked. In response to the question, they identified three key approaches, namely; (i) on-farm training programs, (ii) coaching or mentorship, and (iii) training workshops and seminars. These responses are summarised in table 4.3, listed in order of preference by the participants.

Table 4.3: Preferred learning methods

Preferred learning method	Rating by participants
On-farm training programs	1
Coaching or mentorship	2
Training workshops and seminars	3

On-farm training programs: The participants rated on-farm training programs as the most preferred method. The participants stated that they preferred having trainers visit them in their respective farms to get relevant skills that suit their farms. The most preferred trainers were the extension officers, especially private one, as the participants

felt the government officers were unavailable to assist and skill farmers. Participant 1 indicated that:

“Extension officers are trained to go around, visiting farmers in their own farms and assisting them in their own farming activities. These officers know how to talk to farmers at all levels and have adequate knowledge. All we want is for them to transfer their skills to us formally and not just do things for us without involving us.”

Participant 10 echoed the same sentiments as participant 1 by stating that:

“As much as I want to acquire certain skills, I think it would be best if my trainer came to my farm so that I see the implementation of those skills in real life. To be more specific, I want to learn about irrigation and water management, and also dealing with water-logged soils. I think a physical demonstration in my own farm will therefore be the best way to empower me with these skills instead of learning on a farm that looks nothing like mine.”

Coaching or mentorship was the second most preferred approach by participants. The participants mentioned that they prefer farmers as coaches or mentors so that they could be motivated by their success. Participants 13 argued that:

“This approach would give me a better measuring stick for my own success by watching my mentor perform the same task in his or her own farm in real time to convince me that it is actually doable. Once I see that it is doable in such a period of time, then I will be motivated to push myself to match that time too, unlike in a formal class setup where the teacher would just tell me what to do and how to do it without demonstrating if it was actually doable.”

Participant 17 stated that:

“Coaching is better done by farmers who would invite us to their farms to demonstrate how certain skills are executed on a daily basis. For example, I want to learn about crop rotation. I think it would be better if I watched someone determine the nutrient levels in the soil first, removing any residues of current crops from the soil, preparing the soil for new crops and actually planting those crops. Thus far I know the definition of crop rotation but do not understand which crop should replace which one, when, how and why? I need this demonstrated to me physically for me to understand it.”

Training workshops and seminars were the third and least preferred training approach for various reasons.

Participant 1 was worried about attending such public training sessions due to her age and lack of education. She mentioned that:

“Our needs and levels of understanding differ so I do not want to get embarrassed by these younger kids who are clever and easily understand new concepts. Remember that some of us are the old generation and did not go to school, hence our levels of public participation are compromised by our lack of confidence in ourselves. Therefore, I want to be trained as an individual, not part of a group, unless that group is of people with the same level of understanding as mine.”

However, Participant 11 had a completely different take on this training approach. She argued that:

“I do not think as human beings we will ever have the ability to each possess all the knowledge and skills we need as individuals. For this reason, I think if we were to be called as female farmers into a common place to be trained then we would learn better. I say this because we will motivate each other especially during demonstrations and learn from each other too.”

Participants 11 indicated that this was one way to make them meet their competition. However, instead of regarding each other as enemies, they could forge alliances, share knowledge and skills that will assist them even beyond the workshop itself. For example, if they could know each other's strengths and weaknesses in terms of skills limitations during the workshops, they could assist each other to close gaps and become more successful.

4.5. Research question 3 (RQ 3) results

RQ 3: What are the main challenges encountered by women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector?

Since the research was geared towards enhancing women entrepreneurship, it was important to also investigate the challenges limiting the participants' contribution in the agriculture sector. The basis for understanding these challenges was to assist policy makers in crafting relevant and effective interventions to support female entrepreneurs and make them vital players in the agricultural sector in the province. Discussing these challenges thus addresses sub-objective three of the research.

The participants identified several challenges that affect their performance. To understand the severity of these challenges on performance in their respective businesses, the researcher asked them to rate four of the most severe challenges. The most severe was given a rating of 1 and the least was given a rating of 4. These responses are presented in table 4.5.

Table 4.4: Rating of four key challenges affecting the participants' performance

Identified challenges	Rating
Limited access to resources	1
Social and cultural barriers	2
Limited education and skills	3
Limited access to markets	4

4.5.1 Limited access to resources

According to the participants, limited access to resources is the biggest challenge they are faced with. This covered resources such as funding, technology and extension services. Without any of these in adequate supply, participants felt they would not achieve their desired goals in their respective businesses without adequate supply of resources. Participant 17 argued that:

“Despite having been in the business for over 20 years, I still rely on outdated technology such as hand hoes for planting and weeding instead of a tractor and other things such as a planter and harvester. The hand hoes are not only slow but require too much labour, which is something I do not have access to. Without access to modern technology, I do not see myself growing my business and cultivating more land efficiently at all.”

Participant 4 had a slightly different take on the issue of limited farm equipment. She said that:

“With me I know what I want in terms of technology and where to get it. However, all this depends on me having access to the required funding. Unfortunately, at the moment I do not qualify for any loans because I lack collateral since the land I work on is not in my name. My house is in the rural areas and therefore no value can be attached to it as collateral. Without money, I cannot access the required farming equipment, hence funding is the biggest resource which I lack.”

Participant 13 identified limited extension services as another obstacle.

“I cannot remember the last time I saw my community extension officer. In fact, I do not even know his or her name because it has been too long. I desperately need extension services to deal with various challenges I

encounter in my business daily and therefore view my non-existent access to such services as a very big stumbling block in my business.”

4.5.2 Social and cultural barriers

Even though the lack of resources was identified as the most critical challenge, participants also saw social and cultural dynamics as affecting their access to resources. Gender was identified as one of the biggest challenge. Participants felt they were denied access to certain resources, such as land, owing to their gender. In other words, they felt males producing the same products in similar volumes were given preference over them, such as when applying for funding from financial institutions.

4.5.3 Limited skills and education

This challenge was rated as the third most critical as it forced farmers to rely on the non-existent extension officers for advice and assistance. Thus, the farmers felt it would be much better to acquire all the relevant skills themselves instead of relying on external support. The skills they felt were lacking include crop management, water management and poultry production, as discussed in detail in the previous section.

While participants had some level of formal education (as presented in table 4.1), they felt their education was not relevant as it had nothing to do with agriculture and business management. Furthermore, five participants who are in possession of a matric certificate, felt that their qualification was insignificant to for them to be considered serious players in the industry. Participant 5 stated that:

“I only have a matric certificate and this makes it very difficult to be taken seriously by farmers that have more education than myself. Apart from that, my limited education limits my ability to speak proper ‘business language’ when seeking assistance or negotiating a deal with potential clients, especially in the formal sector. My lack of education has completely wiped out my

confidence and forced me to confine myself to informal clients who pay very little compared to formal markets.”

This challenge was shared by other participants.

4.5.4 Marketing of produce

Market access was rated fourth. Since all the participants had selling their produce in mind, the researcher asked them why they rated limited access to the markets as the least critical challenge. The general response was that if all the first three challenges were addressed, then the produce would be so good that the market would actually find the farmers, not the other way around. In other words, the participants felt the high quality of their produce was going to attract more clients, thus eliminating the need for intensive marketing strategies and efforts. Participant 10 stated that:

“My access to the markets is partly limited by the fact that there are too many farmers supplying the same products as mine. However, if I can get my hand on adequate funding and acquire the latest technology to lower my production costs and enhance the quality of my produce, I am very sure I would compete well with most competitors, gain access to my desired markets and earn fair prices with ease. In other words, my success in terms of accessing the market and competing adequately hinges on me accessing adequate production resources.”

As far as the marketing of the produce was concerned, vegetable farmers preferred gate sales for the benefit of local customers compared to those producing agronomic crops such as maize and beans.

Participant 13, a vegetable farmer, explained this preference of gate sales by stating that:

“The prices of my vegetables and the volumes that I sell, especially for my leafy vegetables such as spinach are too small to justify sending them to a

formal market in town. I therefore see it sensible to sell to those who come to buy from my farm directly than me going to them.”

Even though participant 19 shared the same sentiments as participant 13, her key concerns were that:

“Vegetables are perishable by nature and therefore have to be sold soon after being harvested to fetch high prices. Without a guaranteed market and own transport, harvesting vegetables with the hope of selling them all is too big a risk for me to take. As such, I wait for interested customers to come to my farm to buy than me going to them.”

The research found that some participants had formal contracts with retailers such as Spar, Aheers supermarkets and schools for their nutrition programmes. These participants supplied specific volumes and type of produce to these markets on a frequent basis for agreed prices. Such participants had bigger businesses, which had better returns owing to their guaranteed markets. This eliminated any risks of post-harvest losses. Participant 17 mentioned that:

“I have been in this business for over 20 years and during this time; I have established good relationships with different managers at Aheers Foodworks supermarket in Kranskop. They told me the type of vegetables they wanted, when and how they wanted them. I have been supplying them with fresh vegetable for the past 7 years with incredible success.”

With respect to farmers of agronomic crops, participants preferred selling their produce in formal markets for better returns. For example, sugarcane farmers took their produce to the Gledhow Mill in Stanger, KwaZulu-Natal. Participant 10 had contracts with formal markets such as Frimax Foods for the potatoes and with a local school for its nutrition program. This Participant mentioned that:

“I recently signed a very good deal with Frimax Foods on September 1st 2023. This contract will run for 5 years until August 30th 2028 and I will be supplying

Frimax Foods with 300 tonnes of potatoes each week from my 10Ha farm. I am very happy with the price offered because it is aligned to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and was R3500/t from January to June 2023 and increased to R4000/t from July to December 2023. I get free inputs such as seeds and fertilizer plus harvesting mechanization from Frimax, hence the low price offered. I am happy though because I would not be able to produce or sell anything on my own without the inputs supplied by Frimax.”

Participants 14 and 15 also had active contracts to supply potatoes to Funky Fries local restaurants. The former indicated that she delivered:

“..... 30 x 10kg bags of Mondial potatoes to Funky Fries each week, at a rate of R60/3kg, depending on the quality of the potatoes. However, my contract with them is from January 1st 2022 until January 1st 2024. I hope that it will be renewed after it has expired.”

4.5.5 Balancing domestic and agricultural responsibilities

The issue of women discrimination on the basis that they had several other household chores to prioritize other than farming frequently surfaced during interviews. The researcher deemed it necessary to get the women’s perceptions on this issue of balancing domestic chores with agricultural work. Thirteen participants agreed that they struggle to strike a balance between the two. Five of the participants (1; 2; 3; 4 and 12) strongly agreed with this statement that they could hardly balance the two. Participant 3 felt that:

“As a 54-year-old mother, grandmother and head of my household, looking after three grown up males and seven grandkids, I find it difficult to cope with all the chores at work and the demands of my farm as I cannot be in both places at the same time. Also, I am unable to hire people to assist me at home or in the farm on a daily basis due to limited resources. I have to prepare my grandkids for school five days each week, cook for them before they leave and when they come back. I have to clean the house and do laundry with my own

hands too on a frequent basis. Honestly, I am struggling to cope, considering my age but this economy does not allow me to sit back, fold my arms and enjoy my old age.”

Participant 12 relates her reasons for struggling to cope.

“I am 62 years old, in poor health and the sole owner of my business. My failure to cope could be said to be self-inflicted, partly because I am a perfectionist and therefore do not trust anyone to do a better job than myself. As such, I prefer doing everything myself and ask for very little assistance. This is just my nature and I know most women could relate.”

What could be deduced from the participants was that their struggles were fuelled by their lack of adequate support in their respective homes. Thus, despite being entrepreneurs, they still had specific household roles to play, as mothers and grandparents. It is important to note that some of these household responsibilities and chores were performed out of love. For instance, the love of raising grandkids, which is something some grandparent enjoy. As such, there is no substitute for this role and the entrepreneurs had to endure it too.

Younger women such as participants 2 and 4 were raising very young kids whose delicate nature limited their movement within the yard for most of the time. These participants struggle to get adequate time to work their fields with kids on their backs. They got tired and did not want to expose the kids to prolonged unfavourable weather conditions. Moreover, after harvesting, the women could not freely move to the markets to sell their produce, which negatively affects their income.

On the contrary, seven participants (6; 8; 10; 13; 14; 15; and 20) dismissed the notion that they could not strike a fair balance between household and farm responsibilities. The participants mentioned that they lived in big households where responsibilities were shared equally, with no individual members having more responsibilities than others. For example, Participant 8 mentioned that:

“In my case, I still live with my parents and siblings because I recently graduated from university. Everyone understands that I still have to find my feet in my business and therefore is very supportive. I get more than enough time in my farm and therefore have no reason to say I cannot strike a balance as I have very limited household responsibilities. My mom even looks after my young baby on my behalf so I am free to pursue my farming goals to the fullest. I am not saying women do not have such problems, but I am speaking for myself when I say women can achieve their dreams in farming too as much as men.”

Participant 20 cited that:

“I live with my two daughters who are adults and understand that I am not only old but I am also their mother. As such, they play a very important role in doing the household chores, leaving me with adequate time to rest and attend to my farm too.”

4.6 Chapter summary

This chapter analysed findings responding to the objectives of the research. It explained the types of crops produced by the participants, how they market them, together with their skill levels and challenges encountered in the agricultural sector as women. The next chapter discusses and explains the findings from the research.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research findings related to enhancing women entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector in the KwaZulu-Natal province. The comprehensive discussion of these findings is in alignment with the objectives of this research, guided by the reviewed literature. This alignment not only reinforces the credibility of the research, but also contributes to the ongoing scholarly conversations regarding the topic at hand.

5.2 Description of sample

The findings reveal a notable shift in the demographic makeup of the agricultural sector, particularly among women entrepreneurs. A promising trend emerges, indicating a rise in youth involvement in agriculture, with six interviewed participants classified as youth and five as young adults aged 36-45 years. This observed increase in youth engagement resonates with the findings of Maesela et al. (2024), signalling a dynamic transformation in the sector's demographic composition. This departure from the conventional view of farming being predominated by older individuals hints at a potential revitalization of the agricultural workforce.

Additionally, the findings highlight the significance of education in entrepreneurial activity, with seven out of twenty women entrepreneurs lacking formal education. This correlation between education and entrepreneurial engagement echoes the conclusions drawn by Ndlovu et al. (2022), underscoring the indispensable contribution of education to fostering entrepreneurship. The presence of a considerable number of women entrepreneurs without formal education suggests the need for targeted educational initiatives to enhance entrepreneurial skills and promote innovation within the agricultural sector. This is a new insight that contributes to the existing debates by highlighting the role of education in entrepreneurial engagement in the agricultural sector.

5.3. Research question 1 (RQ 1) discussion

RQ 1: What is KwaZulu-Natal's performance in the agricultural sector?

The findings provide valuable insights into women's involvement in the agricultural sector, with a notable emphasis on crop production, particularly vegetable cultivation. Among the 20 participants, 16 women were engaged in crop production, three in livestock farming and one in horticulture. This dominance of crop production, especially vegetables, underscores the significance of cultivating crops as a means of providing a reliable and regular food source for family members.

In line with Sithole et al. (2023), this research shows that producing vegetables gives family members easy access to food that can be gathered, prepared, and served to them on a regular basis. This ensures household have food security. The research report highlight the viability of starting a farming enterprise, particularly in the context of vegetable farming, emphasizing that it can be carried out in the comfort of one's home. The discussion also draws on literature from Galli et al. (2020), which emphasizes that individuals with various socioeconomic backgrounds can engage in vegetable farming, including the poorest and near-landless individuals. This was found to also be true in this research, as some participants, such as participant 9, mentioned that they cultivate small pieces of land in their backyards for vegetable production.

Furthermore, the report notes that some participants chose to specialize in vegetable production or incorporate vegetables into their existing agricultural systems. This decision allows farmers to diversify their crop portfolios and mitigate risks associated with climate change and other uncertainties (Ebert, 2020). Participant 20 exemplifies this approach, emphasizing the importance of flexibility and resilience in agricultural practices.

5.3.1 Government Initiatives and Support

The research findings shed light on government efforts to support farmers, particularly women entrepreneurs, through various interventions. Notably, ten participants confirmed receiving financial support in the form of grants and loans from state organs such as the

Department of Agriculture. These initiatives align with broader governmental strategies outlined by the South African Government (2012), emphasizing partnerships with key institutions like the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), Public Investment Corporation (PIC), and Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA).

However, despite evidence of significant governmental investment to support entrepreneurs, concerns regarding the effectiveness of these initiatives have been raised. This finding is consistent with the concerns raised by Patil and Babus (2018), who highlight that despite providing physical capital support, many interventions have fallen short of achieving their intended goals. One of the key issues highlighted is the neglect of human capital development within these initiatives. While financial assistance is undoubtedly important, the success and sustainability of farming enterprises may depend equally on the development of skills, knowledge, and capabilities among farmers. This finding suggests the necessity of adopting a more comprehensive approach that integrates both financial and human capital support to guarantee sustained success and competitiveness. While this is not a new finding, it reinforces existing debates on the subject matter.

5.3.2 Job creation

The findings present several key insights regarding the role of women entrepreneurs in creating employment opportunities, both permanent and temporary, within their communities. This aligns with the perspective put forth by Nguyen (2020), who emphasizes the significance of employees as invaluable assets in a successful business. The research findings corroborate Nguyen's assertion, suggesting a similarity between the research outcomes and existing literature.

Furthermore, the research uncovers an alternative approach among women entrepreneurs in utilizing labour for their agricultural activities. Some participants engaged family members in a labour exchange system, such as *ilima*. This practice, as noted by McAllister (2020), is prevalent and has yielded positive results in the South African black society where resources are limited. The research findings echo this sentiment, indicating consistency with the literature. Similar labour exchange approaches have been noted in

the Eastern Cape by Connor and Mtwana (2017), and in other African countries such as Zimbabwe (Mahohoma & Muzambi, 2021; Murisa, 2020).

However, another group of 14 entrepreneurs expressed the perspective that hiring qualified individuals with experience is essential in the agricultural enterprise. This perspective is rooted in the belief that maintaining standards and ensuring quality during activities like weeding and harvesting require expertise. This stance is supported by Elik et al. (2019) and Manandhar et al. (2018) who highlight the direct impact of harvesting methods on the quality, price, and post-harvest storage of agricultural crops.

5.4. Research question 2 (RQ 2) discussion

RQ 2: What is the contribution of women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector?

The research findings indicate a diverse array of motivations driving women's entry into the agricultural sector. One prominent theme identified is the pursuit of food security and poverty alleviation within households. It suggests that many women entrepreneurs in agriculture are motivated by immediate family needs, such as access to nutritious food, generating income, and enhancing overall livelihoods. Additionally, the research highlights other factors influencing women's decision to venture into agriculture, such as unemployment and responses to crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

These findings resonate with the insights by Patil and Babus (2018), underscoring the complex nature of entrepreneurial motivations, influenced by cultural norms, economic opportunities, social dynamics, and personal aspirations. The research echoes these sentiments, highlighting how women's engagement in agriculture stems from a complex interplay of various factors, including economic necessity and response to external challenges.

The research findings also echo the insights provided by Maro et al. (2023), suggesting that embarking on an entrepreneurial journey involves significant decision-making and carries a risk of failure. This finding is not contrary to the existing literature but rather adds a new dimension to the understanding of women's entrepreneurship in agriculture. It highlights the courage and resilience of women entrepreneurs who, despite the risks,

choose to venture into agriculture to meet their families' needs, while contributing to their communities.

5.4.1 Perceived role of women in agriculture

This research highlights the significant role of women entrepreneurs in the industry, despite the lack of adequate support. Out of twenty participants, thirteen view their role as crucial. These women, often heads of households, bear the responsibility of meeting essential family needs. This finding aligns with the observation made by Masenya (2021), reinforcing the argument, that many rural households are headed by women.

Circumstances such as widowhood or the migration of husbands and/or children to urban areas for formal employment opportunities often leave these women without alternative means of livelihood. As a result, they turn to farming as a means of sustaining their households. This finding is a new contribution to the literature, providing a nuanced understanding of the motivations behind women's entrepreneurial activities in the farming sector. Maesela et al. (2024) conclude that women are more entrepreneurial in farming than men due to a lack of alternatives, presenting a contrasting view to the existing literature. The research suggests that entrepreneurship is not always a matter of choice, but a response to limited options.

Furthermore, the research unveils the critical role played by women in the agricultural sector, not only in sustaining rural households but also in providing food security for urban populations. This finding aligns with de Bruin et al. (2021), who point out that the escalating population pressure in cities, coupled with the high cost of urban living, has compelled some urban dwellers to rely on food produced in their rural homes for their survival. This finding underscores the socioeconomic dynamic at play of rural and urban economies and the pivotal role of women in this dynamic.

5.4.2 Skills possessed by the participants

The research findings identify key skill elements among participants, including financial management, business management, marketing and agro-processing. These skills are

found to be crucial in guiding business operations, such as budgeting, record keeping, sales forecasting, price determination, financial statement preparation, and budgeting. They are also deemed critical when applying for funding and searching for investment. The findings align with Neck et al. (2019) who argue that profitability, a cornerstone of entrepreneurship, is closely tied to skills such as financial management. This underscores the importance of these skills in effectively managing operational budgets and driving financial success.

The research challenges the common belief that experience alone dictates business success, emphasizing instead the critical importance of skills in navigating dynamic business environments. The findings support Maesela et al. (2024), who underscore the significant role of managerial experience, practical knowledge, and specialized skills among employees in achieving entrepreneurial success. Kanayo (2021) also emphasizes the relevance of various skill dimensions, including personal entrepreneurial skills, business management skills and technical skills in fostering entrepreneurial success. A unique insight from the research is the predominant role of learning-by-doing in the development of entrepreneurial skills among farmers, as highlighted by Daniel and Olatunbosun (2023). This suggests a lesser reliance on formal education, which is a new contribution to the literature.

5.4.3 Further skills required by the participants

The research also identifies other skills crucial for achieving optimum agricultural yields and quality, such as understanding soil types, crop varieties, planting methods, and pest management. These skills are heavily relied upon by entrepreneurs, especially those engaged in primary agriculture like crop production. Given their technical expertise, women entrepreneurs suggest that local extension officers are ideally positioned to provide these essential skills. The research findings resonate with the work of Sebeho and Stevens (2019), who argue that extension services for agriculture in many South African communities are ineffective and often go unnoticed. The research unveils a significant concern regarding the limited visibility and accessibility of extension officers within the

agricultural community. This is contrary to the expectation that these officers, given their technical expertise, would be readily available and accessible to farmers.

The participants' claims about the inadequacy of extension officers further validate Nyawo and Mubangizi's (2021) study, which finds that extension officers in KwaZulu-Natal are overworked and thus unable to fully serve every farmer in the agricultural sector. The research findings underscore a heavy reliance among entrepreneurs on extension officers for accessing vital information. This is a new contribution to the literature, highlighting the critical role of these officers in supporting entrepreneurial activities in the farming sector.

5.4.4 Preferred skills training interventions

The research findings highlight the significance of training according to audience preference. Entrepreneurs expressed a preference for specific training interventions including on-farm training programs, coaching or mentorship, and training workshops and seminars. These methods were recognized as effective tools for skills enhancement that directly address their needs and contribute positively to the advancement of their agricultural ventures. The findings align with the perspectives by Ndlela and Worth (2021), who suggest that involving farmers in their own skills development initiatives gives them confidence that the trainings will align with their expectations or aspirations.

On-Farm Training Programs: The research findings highlight a preference for on-farm training – a comfort in acquiring new skills within the familiar environment of their own farms. This aligns with the broader perspective presented by Masere and Worth (2021), who assert that farmers, especially those in rural areas, generally feel more at ease when learning new skills in their own farms. This is a new contribution to the literature, emphasizing the importance of context in skills acquisition.

Coaching or mentorship: The research underscores coaching or mentorship as another preferred skills transfer method. This is similar to Rony et al. (2019), who note that coaches or mentors provide regular guidance and instruction to farmers on specific skills until they master them. However, the research also unveils a significant concern regarding

the correlation between the willingness to mentor and the mentees' age and labour dependability, suggesting potential barriers to mentorship. The research findings underscore the existence and importance of mentorship in transferring skills, in line with findings from Nyambo et al. (2020). Interestingly, some farmers were not even aware that they were receiving mentorship, highlighting the subtle, yet impactful nature of the process. This is a new contribution to the literature, emphasizing the effectiveness of peer-to-peer learning and its potential for skills transfer among smallholder farmers.

5.5. Research question 3 (RQ 3) discussion

RQ 3: What are the main challenges encountered by women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector?

The research identifies several challenges that affect the performance of women in agriculture. These challenges include limited access to resources, social and cultural barriers, inadequate skills and education, and lack of access to markets. The research findings concur with existing research, including insights from Matthew et al. (2022), affirming that women involved in agriculture confront a wide spectrum of impediments. The findings suggest that these constraints limit women's ability to reach their goals. Kanayo (2021) indicates that these obstacles impede women's ability to establish, sustain, and expand successful agricultural enterprises.

Recent reports by Materechera and Scholes (2021), spanning from 2013 to 2020, shed light on the numerous difficulties confronting small-scale farmers in the Limpopo province. These challenges severely undermine their potential to make significant contributions to both the provincial and national agricultural economy. This finding is a new contribution to the literature, providing a specific regional perspective on the challenges faced by women in agriculture.

5.5.1 Limited resources

The research identifies a significant lack of resources as a key factor limiting the impact of agricultural entrepreneurs on the economy. This lack of resources hinders their ability

to invest in modern farming technologies and improve their productivity. These findings align with the existing body of literature, particularly the studies by Talanow et al. (2020) and Olofsson (2019), which indicate that a considerable number of black farmers in rural areas face a lack of support, especially financial assistance, from both the private and public sectors.

Furthermore, the research reveals that none of the participants reported having access to advanced technologies, underscoring their reliance on manual methods for farming activities. This finding is consistent with evidence from Muzangwa et al. (2017) and Slayi et al. (2023), suggesting that smallholder farmers, particularly female farmers in South Africa, lack proper farm equipment. This gap in access to modern farming equipment hinders their productivity and efficiency.

Moreover, the research highlights the crucial role of extension services in supporting smallholder farmers. The lack of access to these services in the studied area explains why participants continue to seek to improve their productivity through acquiring basic farming skills, despite the availability of advanced technologies. This finding aligns with observations made by Myeni et al. (2019) in the Free State and Bese et al. (2020) in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. These studies note the absence of adequate extension services, which limits the implementation of sustainable farming methods by farmers, particularly in rural areas. Norton and Alwang (2020) further emphasize the substantial correlation between the adoption of new agricultural technologies and routine interaction with extension systems.

5.5.2 Social and cultural barriers

Participant 16 encountered difficulties in acquiring additional land due to her gender and the absence of collateral in her name. This finding reinforces the existing literature, particularly the work of Glazebrook and Opoku (2020), emphasizing the ongoing marginalization of women farmers in Africa. This marginalization manifests in various ways, including inadequate land tenure, limited access to essential resources, technology, finance, and extension services.

Moreover, the research findings underscore the prevalent exclusion of women from decision-making processes that directly affect their livelihoods, a narrative also presented by Nyahunda et al. (2021). This finding aligns with the observations made by Neubert al. (2019), who point out that socio-cultural practices tend to favor men's access to natural resources such as rangelands, forests, and water, which are essential for sustaining rural livelihoods. The research also supports the assertion that male plot managers in Nigeria had access to more land, allowing them the advantage of crop rotation across multiple plots. In contrast, women are confined to limited plots for the cultivation of staple foods for household consumption. The research findings offer valuable insights into the gender-related challenges confronting women engaged in agriculture in Africa, especially regarding access to land, decision-making, and resources.

5.5.3 Limited skills and education

The research findings underscore that, despite having received formal education, a subset of the interviewed entrepreneurs expressed a perceived lack of essential knowledge and expertise in farming practices. This limited skills set often leads these entrepreneurs to settle for average markets and agreements. This finding aligns with the literature, particularly the work of Nyawo and Mubangizi (2021), who argue that many smallholder farmers struggle with understanding business language. For instance, when buyers use terminology such as “volumes,” “quantity,” and “margins” in negotiations, farmers often respond without a deep understanding of the terms. This lack of comprehension of business language either forces farmers to withdraw from seeking formal markets that offer higher pay or participate without fully understanding the benefits and associated risks.

This finding highlights the gap in knowledge and understanding of business language among smallholder farmers, even those with formal education. It emphasizes the need for targeted interventions to enhance farmers' business language comprehension, which could potentially improve their negotiation skills and enable them to secure better market deals.

5.5.4 Marketing of produce

The research reveals a variety of strategies employed by women entrepreneurs to access markets. Some prefer the simplicity and direct connection offered by selling at farm gates or local markets, while others recognize the potential benefits of formal markets. This finding is consistent with the observations of Courtois and Subervie (2014), who argue that smallholder farmers face a fundamental choice when selling produce. This includes either selling at farm gate for lower prices or incurring transaction costs to access market centers where higher prices may be offered. The research aligns with Manjunath and Girish's (2016) assertion that an inefficient marketing system can adversely affect both producers and consumers. This finding underscores the importance of efficient market systems in ensuring fair trade and profitability for smallholder farmers.

Participant 18's experience further emphasizes the importance of formal agreements in safeguarding against losses, particularly during oversupply periods. The ability to secure stable and predictable transactions through formal contracts not only provides financial security for entrepreneurs but also enhances market stability and trust among stakeholders. This finding is in line with the insights provided by Kanayo (2021), suggesting that this strategy is essential in achieving scalability and stability.

Despite the challenges associated with formal markets, such as the need to maintain the quality of produce and meet market demand requirements, the research findings suggest that these markets offer significant potential benefits. This finding adds to the existing literature by highlighting the experiences and strategies of women entrepreneurs in navigating these challenges.

5.5.5 Balancing domestic and agricultural responsibilities

According to this research, size, composition, and set-up of a family directly influence the ability of female farmers to pursue their farming business. Larger families, or those with able-bodied and grown individuals, provide more members to assist with household chores, thus freeing up time for farming activities. This finding is not a new discovery but

rather an affirmation of the existing understanding of the dynamics within farming households.

Furthermore, the research highlights the importance of shared responsibilities within families. Families that value and accept the sharing of responsibilities tend to enable female farmers to prosper in their businesses compared to those who enforce specific household responsibilities to specific individuals. This finding aligns with the cultural norms mentioned by Sheldon (2017), where certain responsibilities, such as cooking, are traditionally assigned to women in some African cultures. These women are likely to face challenges in balancing their domestic and farming responsibilities, regardless of the size and composition of their households.

A similar situation was noted by Pierotti et al. (2022) in Nigeria, where women faced challenges when selling their produce in the market. This is primarily due to a clash in their domestic responsibilities such as caring for children. There are also logistical difficulties of traveling long distances with infants on their backs and carrying the produce on their heads.

5.6 Chapter summary

This chapter explored various research findings, shedding light on the contributions of the sector to the economy, outlining the roles undertaken by women entrepreneurs, and outlining the challenges they face. The next chapter offers conclusions drawn from the research and presents recommendations derived from these findings. The goal is not only to summarize the key insights, but to offer actionable recommendations for the enhancement of women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

Drawing upon the existing literature and the findings of this research, this chapter offers conclusions and recommendations. These recommendations are not only rooted in the identified challenges but are also informed by the discussions on the empowerment and support mechanisms needed to enhance women entrepreneurs. Moreover, this chapter addresses three research questions that were posed in this research.

- i. RQ 1: What is KwaZulu-Natal's performance in the agricultural sector?
- ii. RQ 2: What is the contribution of women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector?
- iii. RQ 3: What are the main challenges encountered by women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector?

6.2 Conclusions regarding Research Question 1

In addressing research question 1, the findings of the research shed light on various aspects of agricultural activities in the KwaZulu-Natal and its performance in the broader South African economy. The research sought to assess the sustainability of the agricultural industry and whether enhancing the involvement of women entrepreneurs in the sector would yield added value. The research highlighted the significant role played by the agricultural sector in the KwaZulu-Natal economy, contributing to food security, employment generation, and rural livelihoods. The region boasts a diverse array of crops, including vegetables, agronomic crops such as maize, potatoes, and dry beans, as well as sugarcane. Additionally, the livestock industry, comprising poultry and goat production, is thriving in the region.

Efforts to promote crop diversification and value addition were also noted, which could potentially enhance resilience and competitiveness within the agricultural sector. Despite challenges such as limited agricultural land, which negatively affects yields, participants

expressed a willingness to learn and adopt better cropping practices. Cropping practices, such as crop rotation, can be used to maximize yields and mitigate risks associated with market fluctuations, pests, diseases, and adverse weather conditions. While land availability and distribution remain a challenge in South Africa, the industry is characterized by relatively fewer barriers to entry. This is supported by findings indicating that agricultural production can even be carried out in backyard spaces. This underscores the importance of continued efforts to address challenges related to land access and distribution, while also fostering an enabling environment for aspiring entrepreneurs to enter and thrive in the agricultural sector.

6.3 Conclusions regarding Research Question 2

The research findings for addressing research question 2 provide valuable insights into the specific role and impact of women entrepreneurs within the agricultural industry. Understanding the contribution and impact of women entrepreneurs is crucial for enhancing their participation and effectiveness in the economy.

The research confirmed that women entrepreneurs have the capacity to significantly contribute to various aspects of economic and social development. Specifically, women were found to play a crucial role in providing employment opportunities, alleviating poverty within their communities, and contributing to overall economic growth. The presence of hired labour among approximately 14 of the interviewed participants underscores the importance of human resources in their agricultural businesses.

Moreover, the role of women in the agricultural sector extends beyond job creation. As highlighted by Serraj and Pingali (2018), the global population is projected to reach nine billion by 2050, placing increased pressure on the food system and necessitating a rapid increase in food production. Therefore, enhancing the capabilities of women entrepreneurs is critical for ensuring their effective participation in the agricultural value chain and meeting the growing demands of the population.

6.4 Conclusions regarding Research Question 3

Research question 3 investigated the specific barriers and obstacles faced by women entrepreneurs in the agricultural industry. The findings of this research provide valuable insights into the challenges encountered by women entrepreneurs in agriculture, highlighting issues such as limited resources, lack of relevant skills, and social and cultural barriers. One of the key challenges identified is the lack of resources, including technology and information. This barrier not only hinders the establishment and expansion of women agricultural enterprises but also perpetuates inequalities within the sector. The reliance on manual technology further diminishes efficiency and productivity, emphasizing the urgent need for access to modern farming techniques and information.

Moreover, the persistent lack of relevant skills and information remains a significant obstacle for women entrepreneurs in agriculture, despite efforts to enter markets. The crucial role of extension officers in providing essential information and support to farmers is underscored. However, there are concerns about their limited visibility and accessibility, which raise questions about their effectiveness in serving agricultural communities. Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions from policymakers and stakeholders. Initiatives to improve access to resources, enhance technological capabilities, provide relevant skills training, and strengthen extension services are paramount to create an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs to thrive in the agricultural sector and contribute meaningfully to the broader economy.

Table 4.5: Consistency Table: research questions, conclusions and contribution to knowledge

Research Question	Literature-based proposition	Conclusion or answer based on own research	Key differences between initial propositions and findings
What is KwaZulu-Natal's performance in the agricultural sector?	With KwaZulu-Natal possessing significant proportions of untapped agricultural land, there exists a vast potential for boosting food production to cater to the needs of its swiftly growing population. Women, being integral contributors in the agricultural sector, could have a pivotal role in unlocking this potential.	KwaZulu-Natal exhibits potential in its agricultural sector surpassing that of other provinces. The province displays a rich diversity in its agricultural commodities, with sugarcane cultivation prevalent in the northern and southern coastal areas, dairy and irrigated maize production in the Midlands, and a focus on cattle and commercial poultry farming in the inland regions. However, the sector faces specific risks such as land reform, and climate change.	The initial proposition emphasized the significance of the agricultural sector in the South African economy as a whole. The research findings provide a more complex understanding, highlighting the impressive growth and diversification of the agricultural sector in KwaZulu-Natal specifically, as well as the unique challenges it faces. This contributes to a more detailed and region-specific understanding of the role and performance of the agricultural sector in South Africa.
What is the contribution of women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector?	Given the challenges of poverty, particularly in rural regions, and the potential of agricultural activities to alleviate poverty and generate income, empowering women entrepreneurs in agriculture could be a	Women entrepreneurs are significantly contributing to the agricultural sector. Through their entrepreneurial endeavours, they are not only enhancing economic impact but also creating employment opportunities and actively working towards ensuring food security, thus	The initial proposition emphasized the significant role of women entrepreneurs in Africa as a whole. The research findings provide a more detailed understanding of the specific contributions and challenges of women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector. This

Research Question	Literature-based proposition	Conclusion or answer based on own research	Key differences between initial propositions and findings
	key strategy for sustainable development.	addressing critical societal needs.	contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the role and impact of women entrepreneurs in Africa's agricultural sector.
What are the main challenges encountered by women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector?	In light of the obstacles encountered by women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector, it is necessary to adopt a holistic and multi-faceted strategy to tackle these hurdles that hinder their capacity to initiate, maintain, and expand prosperous enterprises.	Women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector face a myriad of challenges. These include gender discrimination, negative societal perceptions, motivation, access to markets, access to funding, lack of education and training, and traditional roles defined for women by society. These challenges prevent them from realising their full potential.	The initial proposition highlighted the numerous constraints faced by women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector. The research findings provide a more detailed understanding of these challenges, including both external factors such as access to land, markets, and funding, and internal factors such as motivation, education, and training requirements. This contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector.

6.5 Recommendations

The recommendations outlined in this chapter are a direct outcome of the research conducted in the KwaZulu-Natal province, involving interviews with 20 women entrepreneurs engaged in agricultural pursuits. By implementing the recommendations put forth in this chapter, stakeholders have the opportunity to contribute to a more

inclusive, supportive, and empowering environment for women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector in the province. This, in turn, can pave the way for sustainable economic development and improved livelihoods within the region.

6.5.1 Tailor skills development

Recognizing the preference for on-farm training programs, coaching or mentorship, and workshops among farmers, policymakers and agricultural stakeholders should design and implement skill development initiatives that align precisely with the practical needs and preferences of entrepreneurs. This tailored approach has the potential to empower women with the necessary knowledge and expertise, fostering a more skilled and confident workforce.

6.5.2 Provision of financial support and resources

Efforts should be made to address the financial constraints faced by women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector. Access to financial resources, modern farm equipment, and technological advancements can significantly enhance productivity and contribute to the overall growth of the agricultural economy.

6.5.3 Technology adoption

This research noted that most farmers were still using basic farming tools such as hand hoes, which are not efficient and labour intensive. As such, the research recommends that female entrepreneurs be encouraged and supported to embrace new farming technologies. This can involve receiving instruction in the use of cutting-edge irrigation techniques, digital tools for market research, and precision farming. However, all this relies on the availability of adequate financial support.

6.5.4 Enhance extension services

Addressing the current lack of visibility and accessibility of extension officers is imperative. Adequate staffing and comprehensive training programs should be

implemented to ensure that farmers, especially women entrepreneurs, receive timely and relevant information. Enhancing extension services is crucial for improving agricultural practices and overall productivity.

6.5.5 Networking and mentorship programs

Create networks and mentorship initiatives that link seasoned female business owners with those beginning or growing their agricultural ventures. Mentoring offers beneficial advice, information, and connections with other people.

6.5.6 Social and cultural sensitization

One of the findings of this research is that some women found it challenging to acquire land or strike a balance between their household responsibilities and farming activities because of their gender. Gender was also blamed for the limited recognition and support for women in the sector. As such, the research recommends that awareness programmes be implemented to dispel myths about women's involvement in agriculture and conventional gender norms. It is imperative to teach communities to acknowledge and value the accomplishments made by women in the industry. Such initiatives involve challenging stereotypes and promoting gender equality in vital aspects such as land tenure, decision-making processes, and resource allocation. The goal is to empower women in the face of gender-related challenges.

6.5.7 Research and monitoring

Encouraging in ongoing research and monitoring initiatives is crucial for assessing the impact of interventions and understanding evolving challenges and opportunities faced by women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector. This continuous assessment will inform future policy adjustments and program refinements, ensuring a responsive and adaptive support system.

6.5.8. Policy support and advocacy

Promote gender-sensitive agricultural policies that take into account the unique requirements and difficulties that women face. Equal opportunity, equitable treatment and assistance for female entrepreneurs should all be encouraged by policy.

Adopting these recommendations requires collaborative efforts from the government, its agencies, the private sector, NGO's and civil society to create an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector. By prioritizing these aspects, there is a potential to unlock the full economic and social potential of women in agriculture, contributing to sustainable development and poverty reduction in South Africa.

6.6 Suggestions for further research

Conducting in-depth case study research of successful women entrepreneurs within KwaZulu-Natal's agricultural sector could offer invaluable insights into the specific strategies, experiences, and contextual factors that contribute to their success. By investigating the stories of these entrepreneurs, researchers can illuminate best practices, identify common challenges, and inform tailored interventions to support aspiring women entrepreneurs. Incorporating a mixed research approach, which combines qualitative and quantitative methods, would enrich the comprehensiveness and depth of understanding of the research topic.

Additionally, evaluating the impact of existing support programs and interventions aimed at enhancing women entrepreneurship in agriculture is crucial. By thoroughly assessing the effectiveness of these initiatives, researchers can identify gaps, measure outcomes, and refine strategies to maximize their impact on women's economic empowerment and livelihood improvement. Utilizing a mixed research method would enable a comprehensive evaluation, allowing researchers to capture both quantitative outcomes and qualitative insights. This holistic approach would facilitate the identification of areas for program refinement and improvement, ultimately contributing to more impactful interventions.

The suggestions for further research outlined above present vital opportunities to advance comprehension and guide initiatives aimed at enhancing women entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector in KwaZulu-Natal. By engaging in thorough investigation using mixed research approach and evidence-based policymaking, stakeholders can collaboratively strive towards fostering a more inclusive, fair, and prosperous agricultural environment conducive for the success of women entrepreneurs.

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APPENDIX A: Interview Guide

Instruction: Mark the appropriate block with an X

Name of participant _____

Age of participant _____

Date of interview _____

Area/location of farm/enterprise _____

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

A1. Please state your age

A2. Please state your population group.....

A3. Please state your highest education.

SECTION B: ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNEY

B1. Kindly explain how you acquired your business.....
.....
.....

B2. Please provide information on the commodity you specialise on.....
.....
.....

B3. Please explain how long you have been operating in this sector.....
.....

B4. Please share the factors that motivated you to start your enterprise(s).....
.....
.....

B5. Provide information about your employed labour, if any.....
.....
.....

SECTION C: ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

C1. What is your opinion on the role played by women in the agricultural sector?

.....

C2. Share your view on the recognition women get for their contribution to the agricultural

.....

C3. What is your perception on gender equality in the agricultural sector?

.....

C4. Kindly mention the skills that you possess which are crucial in managing your business.....

C5. What is your view on the provision of training and capacity-building opportunities specifically targeted at women in agriculture necessary?

.....

C6. Please discuss any other skills you think you need to enhance your business.

.....

C7. Kindly mention your preferred skills training approaches to enhance your business.

.....

SECTION D: CHALLENGES

D1. What is your opinion on women entrepreneurs' level of access to agricultural markets and value chains.....

.....

D2. What is your opinion on the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs' in the agricultural sector in accessing financial resources and capital.....

.....

D3. Women struggle with balancing domestic responsibilities and agricultural work.

.....

D4. Share your opinion on the perceived gender bias against women entrepreneurs in agriculture in accessing business opportunities.

.....

SECTION E: AGRICULTURAL SECTOR'S PERFORMANCE

E1. Kindly share if you have ever received any funding for your business?

.....

E2. Discuss the challenges you encountered in getting support from Government and other funding entities.

.....

E3. In order of importance, please mention your sources of commodity advice in your agricultural business.

.....

E4. Please indicate if you have ever acquired any skills relevant to your business?

.....

E4.1. If “YES”, when?

≤ 3yrs ago	3 – 5yrs ago	5 – 10yrs ago	≥10yrs
------------	--------------	---------------	--------

E4.2. If “NO”, do you require any skills trainings?

YES	NO
-----	----

E5. In your view, how important is mentorship for women entrepreneurs in agriculture?

Very important	Important	Not sure	Not important
----------------	-----------	----------	---------------

E6. In terms of priority, what are the top three specific support needs you have as an entrepreneur in the agricultural sector to enhance your business success and promote growth?

- a)
- b)
- c)

E6.1. If “YES”, do you have anyone in mind to assist you satisfy with your needs?

YES	NO
-----	----

E7. How often do you attend or participate in the following educational activities?

Type of educational activity	Never	Once a month	Once in three months	Once in six months
(a) Farmers Information days				
(b) Agricultural workshops				
(c) Agricultural short courses/training				
(d) Other (Please specify)				

E8. Based on the answer in E7, have you noticed any significant impact or benefits from attending these educational activities?

.....

.....

E9. What improvements or changes do you believe are necessary to enhance the performance of the agricultural sector in supporting women entrepreneurs?

.....

.....

E10. In your own opinion, what role do you think the Government and other stakeholders should play in enhancing women within the sector?

.....

.....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!!!!

APPENDIX B: Letter Granting Permission



agriculture, land reform & rural development

Department:
Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT: KWAZULU – NATAL
PRIVATE BAG X9000, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200, 188 HOUSEN HAFEEJEE STREET, TEL: (033) 355 4300 FAX: (033) 264 9500

University of the Witwatersrand
WITS Business School
2 St David's Place, Parktown
Johannesburg
South Africa

**RE: PERMISSION FOR MS NOKUBONGA HAPPY ZONDI TO ACCESS THE
DATABASE AND CONDUCT RESEARCH ON FEMALE AGRICULTURAL
ENTREPRENEURS WITHIN KZN PROVINCE FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES.**

We acknowledge your request to access the database maintained by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) for the purpose of collecting data for your research titled "Enhancing Women Entrepreneurship in the Agricultural Sector within the KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa."

We are pleased to grant you permission to access the database and interview beneficiaries as required for your research.

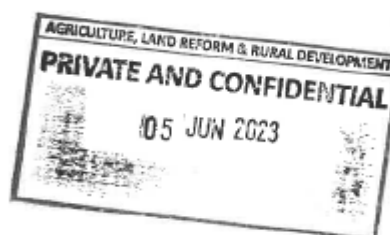
Yours sincerely,

MR M B THABETHE

DIRECTOR: COOPERATIVES & ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT (KZN)

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

DATE: 05/06/2023





APPENDIX C: Ethical clearance certificate

Graduate School of Business Administration
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg



Wits Business School Ethics Committee
Constituted under the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical)

Ethics Clearance Certificate

Ethics protocol number: WBS/BA2616135/491

This certificate is only valid with a legitimate ethics protocol number and signed by the Researcher (below).

Project title	Enhancing entrepreneurship amongst women in the agricultural sector within KwaZulu-Natal
Investigator / Researcher	Ms Nokubonga Happy Zondi
Nature of Project	MBA (Research Article)
Decision of the Committee	Approved, provided stakeholders and participants are guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality.
Issue Date of Certificate	9/11/2023
Expiry date	Date of submission of the project / research report
Chairperson	Dr Pius Oba ☎ +27 11 717 3976 ☎ +27 82 733 6587 ✉ pius.oba@wits.ac.za

Declaration by Researcher

One copy must be signed by the Researcher and returned to the Chairperson of the Wits Business School Ethics Committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Signature

13/09/2023
Date:

APPENDIX D: Participant Information Sheet (PIS)

Dear Madam

My name is Nokubonga Zondi and I am a Masters student in Business Administration at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My supervisor is Dr Nomusa Mazonde. I am conducting a research on women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector. The research is title “Enhancing Women Entrepreneurship in the Agricultural Sector within the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Province of South Africa”.

If you agree to take part, I would like to interview you at a time and place that is suitable for you. The interview is a once off and will last about 20 minutes. The information provided will be kept confidential and anonymous. When I share the results of the research, I will not include your name or anything else that could identify you. If you decide to take part in the research, it should be because you want to volunteer. You can stop being in the research at any time. You also do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to. You will not get any direct benefits if you choose to join the research. You will not lose any services, benefits or rights you would normally have if you decide not to join.

Taking part in the research will not cost you. You will not be paid for being in this research. The risks for this research are no more than what happens in everyday life. This research will be written up as a research report. If you would like to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you. If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher:

Nokubonga Happy Zondi,
Email: 2616135@students.wits.ac.za

Supervisor:

Dr Nomusa Mazonde,
Email: Nomusa.Mazonde@wits.ac.za

APPENDIX E: Consent Form for Participation

Title of research: Enhancing Women Entrepreneurship in the Agricultural Sector within the KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa

I agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research was explained to me. I understand what this research is about.	YES	NO
---	-----	----

I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the research	YES	NO
--	-----	----

I agree that direct quotations from my interview may be used by the researcher in their research report	YES	NO
---	-----	----

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name or other identifying data will not be used by the researcher in their research report)	YES	NO
---	-----	----

I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my interview (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on	YES	NO
--	-----	----

..... (Signature)

..... (Name of participant)

..... (Date)

..... (Signature)

..... (Name of researcher/person seeking consent)

..... (Date)