

IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCY OF GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO SUPPORT THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR: EXTERNAL EVALUATIONS IN THE WESTERN CAPE PROVINCE OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract:

Agriculture has been identified as one of the key economic sectors to support economic growth at international (the African Union's Agenda 2063), national (South Africa's National Development Plan), provincial (Provincial Strategic Plan) and local government levels. In each case measurable targets have been set for the Agricultural Sector (e.g. 6% economic growth in Africa; 1 million jobs in South Africa) and a series of implementation plans were developed.

However, the question needs to be asked how efficient these implementation plans are. In answering the question regarding the efficiency of its own interventions, the Western Cape Department of Agriculture has embarked on a rolling multi-year evaluation programme conducted by external evaluators. The objective of these evaluations is to learn and improve the effectiveness and impact of its interventions. This process afforded each division an opportunity to have its activities objectively reviewed and in doing so, any decision-making process that follow would be based on relevant data and information collected using scientific methods that conform to international best practice. Furthermore, the evaluations would provide the scientific basis for which decisions taken by Government are used in planning, budgeting, organisational improvement and policy review to improve performance during service delivery to the sector.

The purpose of this poster paper is to provide an overview of some of the completed evaluations as well as to provide the main recommendations flowing from each. The following evaluations will be discussed:

a) A diagnostic and design evaluation of the service needs of various industry and farmer categories as well as the best way of meeting these needs. This takes into account broad spectrum of farmers in the Western Cape ranging from multi-national agribusinesses to farmers with only one large-stock unit. In addition to category specific needs, cross-cutting needs such as social transformation and personal contact were identified.

A diagnostic evaluation to identify the five most important constraints created by government's rules and regulations. The five key constraints were policies regarding: farm worker accommodation; access to water rights; approval processes for Environmental Impact Assessments; inaccessible preferential procurement contracts for smallholder farmers; and aspects of labour legislation.

An evaluation of the Market Access Programme (MAP) which was designed to improve market access for farmers. The key finding was that the intervention should move its scope from "market access" to "market readiness".

An implementation and impact evaluation of the long-term crop rotation trials on the sustainability of farming systems in the grain producing areas of the Swartland. It was found that the majority of farmers in the region (98,8%) are implementing crop rotation and it has had a positive impact on farming in the area.

Keywords: *Evaluations, Policy planning, Agricultural Sector, South Africa*