Interview: Seun

1. Date: 2021-02-24
2. Time: 11 am

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| Hello, I am Zakes Hlatshwayo, I am a PhD candidate doing an academic study on: Emerging black farmers’ practices and state support to them: a study of three government Agriparks in South Africa. This study will explore the practices of emerging black farmers and their successes and challenges in three selected areas where Agriparks exist. Thank you for your willingness to participate. We are interested to understand your role and experience. Information will be used only for academic and research purposes. You do not have to give your name if you don’t want to and can decline to answer any question. I appreciate your assistance and request you provide as much information as possible to help me understand your work.  The research study has been approved by the University of Pretoria’s Research Ethics Committee. Your privacy and confidentiality will be secured. No direct reference will be made to you, I will use a pseudonym, codes and categories to keep information about you confidential, and to protect it from unauthorized disclosure, tampering, or damage. You are not required to use your name, do not write your name on any of the documents. The data will be kept for 15 years in a password protected format and used for University of Pretoria research only.  For the purpose of this research I will use semi-structured questions, with your permission I will record the interview and take notes. The interview will not be longer than 50 minutes. Hopefully, the information will help policymakers, practitioners, officials and managers to make informed decisions on such programmes in the future. | | | |
| RQ1: What is your name? Seun  RQ2: Where do you live? Westonaria, single.  RQ3: What is your highest level of qualification? Below matric  RQ4: Gender: Male  RQ5: Age: 30   * Do you farm? I’m a fresh produce farmer (horticulture). * What do you farm? Spinach, Pepper-bells, carrots, kale pumpkins, and tomatoes. * When did you start? I started in early 2010. * How did you start? I always kept a small backyard garden at my family home. * Why did you start? It is a common township practice to grow your own veggies, which lessens buying of vegetables from the market. | | | |
| RQ6: Where is the land located? | | Agripark | The land I’m now farming is located in Westonaria. I started here around 2010 growing Spinach, Pepper-bells, carrots, kale and tomatoes |
| RQ7: How long have you been farming here? | | +6year | The size is about 1 hectare covered by a net. |
| I’m part of a PTY (ltd) that is registered to farm, there is three of us but other members have other engagement and are not always here. I sometimes get guys to come in and farm to raise money for themselves but this place is far to walk. Taxis to come here is expensive I have to walk 15 km one way every time I come here. | | | |
| RQ8: How did you get access to the land? | |  | I saw an advert in a local paper, I can’t remember which one, I applied and was accepted. It was a three years contract, but I’m still here, there was no extension of the contract signed. |
| RQ9: Do you own the land? | | Do not own the land. | The land is owned by the local municipality, the farming project is funded by the Department of Agriculture which provides the service to us. |
| The contract has long since expired but has not been extended, they are uncertain about the long-term use. The dates are unknown. The department was not keen to share the contracts with me because of the personal information provided. | | | |
| RQ11: Where did you learn to farm? | |  | My family always farmed back in North West, mostly livestock. |
| RQ12: Have you received any training on farming? | | Yes. | I participate in a number of workshops offered by various NGOs. We also have interns who come and give advice on farming practices. |
| Seun was part of the group that received training from the agriculture SETA, it was offered in Pretoria, and cannot remember the dates. | | | |
| RQ13: What are the sources of your livelihoods? | |  | I get income from the sale of fresh produce. I’m a full-time farmer. |
| RQ14: How do you support your family? | |  | I have my own place and survive on what I grow and sell. It is not enough but there is nothing else to do. |
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| RQ15: What forms of labour/equipment do you use? | Mainly manual labor, hoes, spades shovels, and other self-made equipment. The people from the public works programme clear the weed and grass from the outside area but do not get into the farming area. When the Agripark tractor is working, it rarely does, it is used. | | |
| RQ16: What other forms of support do you get? | I sometimes get my friends to come and help, but that is very rare. | | |
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| RQ17: When did you get involved in the Agripark? | I started farming here around 2011. | | |
| RQ18: Where did you hear about it? | Above | | |
| The criteria are that you should be a self-started farmer to be incubated here. None of my family members farm here. | | | |
| RQ20: What support have you received from Agripark? | |  | The shaded net land that I farm, free borehole water, various seedlings, and extension support services. Security. |
| RQ21: Other services | |  | Infrastructure like storage, security, and extension support, all of this is limited and inconsistent. For instance, the fridge never works and people still steal from us. |
| RQ22: What improvement has been brought? | |  | Nothing much, we had a shutdown, and we demanded more support like funding for training, transport, and equipment to improve our farming. |
| RQ22: Do you sell any of your products? | | Yes. | I sell the bulk of my produce to small traders who come here and bakkie off-takes who buy and sell to others. I also sell directly to the community, door to door. |
| RQ23: When did you start selling? | |  | I started selling during my backyard garden times, I expanded when I came to the Agripark.  I sell on a cash basis, with no credit. It is a safe and best way to do business. |
| RQ24: Have you participated in Agripark meetings and decided on priorities? | |  | There are random meetings on what is happening here. These are mainly management meetings, we don’t get to influence issues though we raise them. Not on the future vision and plans. The overall management and planning are done by managers.  It would be best to know about the future of Agripark.  The communication is insufficient. |
| RQ25: What concerns and issues have arisen concerning the Agripark? How have they been resolved? | |  | What is the future of the Agriparks, will government continue to support them? We hear, from the news, of budget cuts we are not sure how these will affect our future.  We need land, we have to farm on our own, but the government is not clear. |
| RQ26: In what way can Agriparks be improved, any suggestions? | |  | Help us find our own land with state support. It is difficult to succeed without state support. We need state loans and committed extension officers to support our progress. Agriculture land is expensive so are inputs and other services.  The support is sufficient to keep us here, not to be private.  We need more hydroponic tunnels, outside farming is no good during winter.  More youth and women should be brought on board. |
| RQ27: Did you about the Covid-19 pandemic and from where?  Have you been impacted by Covid-19? | | Yes. | I first heard about it from the news and other people, and we were later informed by the management here.  The hard lockdown forced us to stay at home, we lost produce and money. We were not given time to reap any of our products. We lost income.  On our return, it was handwork to prepare the soil to plant.  We had to buy our own protective clothing and sanitizer. |
| Did you apply for the Covid-19 relief grant? | |  | The department has applied on our behalf, I am still waiting. |
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| RQ28: Have benefited from the interns? | | Yes. | Interns from college come to work with us as part of their studies, we benefit from their knowledge, and we share our experience it is reciprocal. |
| RQ29: Are there any other issues you would like me to look into? | |  | Look into the government’s long-term plans for the Agriparks programme and the future of black farmers. |
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Seun emphasized the issues of access to land and financial investment by the government in black farmers. Young black farmers cannot raise capital from commercial banks and investors.