**Westonaria Agriparks:** Uncle

1. Date: 2021-03-11
2. Time: 14:00

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| Hello, I am Zakes Hlatshwayo, a Ph.D. candidate at UP, conducting a study on emerging black farmers’ practices and state support to them, the study is conducted in three provinces. This study aims to understand emerging black farmer practices and how they are supported by the state. Thank you for your willingness to participate. I am interested to understand your farming practices and experience, as well as the support you receive. 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 us 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? Uncle  RQ2: Where do you live? Westonaria, I’m married with three children. I’m a pensioner, and have worked in the mines for many years.  RQ3: What is your highest level of qualification? Below matric  RQ4: Gender: Male  RQ5: Age: 62 | | | |
| RQ6: Do you farm? If so what do you farm? When did you start? How did you start? Why did you start, what informed your decision? Where is the farm located? | | I farmer here in the Agripark | Basil, butternut, coriander, spinach tomatoes, pepper bells, lettuce, and carrots. |
| RQ7: How long have you been in this farm? | | +6year | Since 2014 |
| I started as part of the Seriti farming cooperative of four women and myself, the cooperative was funded by Stillwater South Deep mines to clear the land, which was later converted to the Agripark, in 2015. The mine paid us R250 for the first two weeks, R500 for three weeks, and R1500 in December. We were 300 people at the beginning and the number shrank to 86 after the mine stopped the stipend, in 2017. (She could not explain the gaps in the sequence of payments and dates). When they started Seriti they were 19 then 9, then 5. There is now only four of them in ABMK PTY (Ltd.) being the initials of the members, 2017. | | | |
| RQ:8 Where do you farm? | | Westernaria Agripark | The size is about 9 hectares covered by a net. |
| RQ9: What do you grow? | | High-value crop | Basil, butternut, coriander, spinach tomatoes, pepper bells, lettuce, and carrots |
| Sometimes during the winter season, they grow pumpkins and kale, green peppers. At other times buyers pre-order what they want us to grow, they provide the seed then we grow it. | | | |
| RQ10: How many hectares do you farm? | | 1. hectares |  |
| RQ11: How did you obtain this land, and under what tenure? | |  | We were groups from neighbouring communities. South Deep Mine approached us to clear the land for farming.  South Deep Mine negotiated with the municipality that we farm. Later Agriparks took over, I was given a three-year contract. |
| A contract to use the land, which is owned by a local municipality, is valid for 3 years, renewable. The farmers had mentors from the African Grow Company who were paid by the mine. | | | |
| RQ12: Have you always produced and sold the same things? | | Yes | I produce and sell the same crops; the volumes vary according to yield. |
|  | |  | I sometimes buy my own seeds and fertilizer when there are delays from the department. |
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| RQ13: How did you start farming? | I started farming in the Eastern Cape where I come from, we family farms, cattle, and goats. | | |
| How did you learn about the Agripark? | I was assimilated/ integrated from the initial group that cleared the land. It was explained to us by the Department of Agriculture that they were taking over the project. | | |
| Where did you obtain the capital? | I used my own money and stipend, and later earnings from sales. | | |
| RQ14: How many people work here, temporary and full-time? | There are four members of the cooperative, full-time, I am sickly and come rarely, but I still share everything with them. I have a variety of old age-related ailments. | | |
| RQ:15 What are your main inputs? | Seedlings, water, pesticides, fertilizers, nets, and equipment. Packaging. Transport hire. Sometimes when the Agri park’s tractor is broken, like now, we contribute to fixing it and buy petrol. | | |
| RQ18: Where do you get your input from? Mainly from the Agripark, but sometimes we buy our own.  RQ19: Where do you sell? Community stalls, bakkie off-takers, Pick & Pay. We use crates and boxes, there is no branding. | | | |
| RQ20: What do you supply? | |  | Basil, butternut, coriander, spinach tomatoes, pepper bells, lettuce, and carrots |
| * How often? | |  | Daily |
| * How did you get the market? | |  | Buyers come here, it’s by word of mouth. |
| * Are produce collected or delivered? | |  | All sales are collected, except when I go sell to the community I hire a transport or take a taxi depending on the size. |
| * What quantity or value of each crop produced? * What market works best, and why? | |  | It varies on the availability of seedlings, the value depends on the quality, all are not stable. But we don’t experience challenges selling, we are happy.  Hawkers and communities, pay better prices than markets. I feel cheated by the markets, they pay less per bundle. |
| * What could be done to make markets work better? | |  | If markets were decentralised and given full onsite facilities, things would be cheaper and better. |
| * Have you sold elsewhere before, if so, where? | | No | Johannesburg and Pretoria markets. |
| * Are you part of an organisation or association? No. I only work with members of the company with one other affiliation. * Do you have any other collaboration, individual or group? No. | | | |
| * has there been any changes in your farming? | |  | Input costs are higher. There is pressure on the women working alone. |
| * How did you hear about Covid-19? * How did Covid 19 affect you? * How did you respond to the government’s lockdown? * How did you hear about the government’s response and how did you benefit? | |  | From Agripark management. Also form the radio and other news.  Lack of income, high costs and poor nutrition. I borrowed money to feed my family and be up to date with my Stokvel contribution.  Lost a whole pre-ordered coriander harvest to the lockdown, input, and labor down the drain.  I did not apply for the Covid grant, because I’m a pensioner. My wife is a pensioner, we tried to make ends meet.  I have not heard anything about government support, because I’m not always here. |
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| Any other issues, you would like to raise? | | I need my own land but do not have the capital. | As a black cooperative, we cannot get a bank loan or investors. I’m a pensioner and cannot get a loan. |
|  | |  | Emerging black farmers need to organise and influence policy reforms. We do not get the same treatment that white farmers receive from the banks or what they received under apartheid. |

Observation: Agripark management is poor, not transparent, and does not communicate well. Not receiving inputs on time, shortage of facilities like storage and cooler room which are important for post harvesting. All this has an impact on what is produced, and how/when it is sold and stored.

Uncle is frail, looks in poor health, and is unable to do the hard work done by the women.

He reasons that government can do a lot more to support emerging farmers by making cash loans available and providing other forms of support.

He complains about the white mentors who are often brought by the government or other institutions. He claims that the white mentors are condescending and disrespectful of their views and opinions.

Repairs to equipment are not done in time, during my visit a tractor had broken down while waiting to be fixed. Agripark management wants them to contribute money to have it fixed, they cannot afford it.

The security fence is broken and people steal, some have organised their own security. One farmer brought a dog, a German shepherd, the security complained that they were not trained as dog handlers. They required training and a raise in salary.

Covid-19: Feel insecure about the long-term impacts of Covid-19 on their farming, families, and general well-being.

General, like in all other Agriparks farmers believe there is great potential if the government commits resources and training, especially in the local municipality. A recurring chorus, though people complain, there is a sense that things could be done better.