Interview: Musa

1. Date: 2021-04-04
2. Time: 8 am

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| Hello, I am Zakes Hlatshwayo, a 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 in understanding your farming practices and experience and 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? Musa  RQ2: Where do you live? Westonaria, single and unemployed  RQ3: What is your highest level of qualification? Matric  RQ4: Gender: Male  RQ5: Age: 31 | | | |
| RQ6: Do you have another job? | | No |  |
| RQ:7 How long have you been on this farm? | | +2years | Since 2019 |
| Started with 4 others in a cooperative of 5 young men called Seeds of Change. Started on some mine land near where he lives in Lebanon (mine area, past Westonaria). Advert came out. Then saw an opportunity here (Agripark) and applied. The other members quickly dropped out just before the pandemic (Feb/March 2020) and he was left alone. He carries on by himself. He is determined to succeed. “The drive. I am not a failure, I have never been a failure, I always knew it was going to be a difficult job.” | | | |
| RQ8: Where do you farm? | | Westernaria Agripark | 5,000m2 under shade. |
| RQ9: What do you grow? | | High-value crop | spinach tomatoes, pepper bells, lettuce, and carrots |
| Sometimes during the winter season, he grows 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. Sell to a few local supermarkets (Sun Fruiters in Westonaria, Malmas, and Tivoli), but mostly I sell door-to-door, mostly in Lebanon. | | | |
| RQ10: How many hectares do you farm? | | 5,000m2 |  |
| RQ11: How did you obtain this land, and under what tenure? | |  | Started on land owned by the mine near where he lives in Lebanon (mine area, past Westonaria). Advert came out. Then saw an opportunity here (Agripark) and applied. |
| A contract to use the land, which is owned by the 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. |
|  | |  | She sometimes buys her own seeds and fertilizer when there are delays from the department. |
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| RQ12: How did you start farming? | Started on land owned by the mine near where he lives in Lebanon | | |
| RQ13: How did you learn about this opportunity? | I always had an interest in agriculture and started getting information from different sources like newspapers and YouTube. | | |
| RQ14: Where did you obtain capital? | I used my own money and stipend, and later earnings from sales. | | |
| RQ15: How many people are employed, temporary and full-time? | I have four friends who come and help from time to time, when I got this place it was all bush and wild grass. I had to work hard to clear it. | | |
| RQ16: What are your main inputs? | Seedlings, water, pesticides, fertilizers, and labour. | | |
| RQ17: Where do you get your inputs from? Mainly from the Agripark, but sometimes I buy own.  RQ18: Where do you sell? Sell to a few local supermarkets (Sun Fruiters in Westonaria, Malmas, and Tivoli), but mostly I sell door-to-door, mostly in Lebanon. | | | |
| RQ19: What do you supply? | |  | spinach tomatoes, pepper bells, lettuce, and carrots |
| * How often? | |  | At least twice a week |
| * How did you get the market? | |  | Buyers come here, it’s by word of mouth. I do rounds when I got back home. |
| * Are produce collected or delivered? | |  | 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, why? | |  | Depending on the seedlings, the value depends on the quality, all are not stable.  Hawkers and communities pay better prices than markets. |
| * What could be done to make markets work better? | |  | Government must establish and control the markets so as to help uplift small-scale farmers. We are dominated by the big farmers. |
| * Have you sold elsewhere before, if so, where? | | No | . |
| RQ20: Are you part of an organisation or association? No. I only work with members of the company with one other affiliation. He does not imagine reviving the cooperative. “honestly it’s difficult to manage a cooperative because we have different ambitions as people, I am actually in works to register my own private company” Lives in Lebanon.  RQ21: How can Agripark be improved to support emerging black farmers? The land is the main issue, black people must be given good land to farm and produce food. Emerging black farmers are important for change in the country both for economic growth and job creation. There is depends on a few mainly white farmers to operate agriculture this is not just and fair. Black farmers must unite and push for change and transformation, otherwise, apartheid is still with us. We need all the institutional support we can get both private and public. The issue is the funding of small-scale farmers, you need a government that is committed to that. I tried mobilizing for loans, but each time I was rejected, partly because black farmers are not taken seriously and partly because I’m unemployed.  How can Agripark be improved to provide support and service? Now that we have a dedicated program we need funds and extension officers to work more closely with us. We need better research, information, and development resources that will help us grow the economy and end poverty. The department is not playing that developmental role of creating linkages and collaboration between farmers, markets, and financiers, we need that.   * Do you have any other collaboration, individual or group? No. I think we need a farmer’s union of some sort that will respond to our cries. | | | |
| * Has then been any changes in your farming? | |  | Input costs are higher. |
| RQ22: How did you hear about Covid-19?   * 30 How did Covid 19 affect you? * 31 How did you respond to government’s lockdown? * 32 How did you hear about the government’s response and how did you benefit? | |  | From Agripark management.  Lack of income, high costs and poor nutrition. I lost the crop that I could not harvest  Applied and received Covid grant, reorganised family life.  Agripark management and received Covid-19 relief support grant (amount not disclosed). |
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Notes: He used to work at Stuttafords at Eastgate selling clothes, said he did quite well, and earned around R10,000 or more a month, but it wasn’t for him. He resigned and said he had to find himself. “I resigned because I needed to find myself, I wasn’t happy with what I was doing”. I knew farming is what I wanted to do for my life. He wants his own land, but he cannot find a bank that is willing to give him, argues that blacks are unable to get funds because of racial discrimination. He has been rejected by commercial banks and other investment institutions.

Those who left the coop said they looking for a job. Transport is a challenge, it is a long way. He does not imagine reviving the cooperative. “honestly it’s difficult to manage a cooperative because we have different ambitions as people, I am actually in works to register my own private company” Lives in Lebanon. It is about 15kms away, he used to walk, about 3 hours.

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.