Interview: Solo

1. Date: 2021-02-24
2. Time: 9 am

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| Hello, I am Zakes Hlatshwayo, I am a Ph.D. 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? Solo  RQ2: Where do you live? Rooiwaal, she is a single mother of one child.  RQ3: What is your highest level of qualification? Below matric  RQ4: Gender: Female  RQ5: Age: 32 | | | |
| RQ6: Do you have another job? | | No |  |
| RQ7: How long have you been in this job? | | +3year |  |
| I’m part of a cooperative that is registered to farm, there are three of us women. | | | |
| RQ8: Where do you farm? | | Rooiwaal Agripark |  |
| RQ9: What do you grow? | | High value crop | Spinach, pepper bells, lettuce, carrots |
| Sometimes during the winter season, they grow pumpkins and kale. | | | |
| RQ10: How many hectares do you farm? | | 1hectare |  |
| RQ11: How did you obtain this land, under what tenure? | |  | We heard about this opportunity from the other women who farm here. We applied for the vacancy and were accepted to farm. |
| A contract to use the land, which is owned by the local municipality, is valid for 3 years, renewable. Farmers have to move to their own land. I could not get a copy of the contract. The farming project is supported by the Department of Agriculture. | | | |
| RQ12: Have you always produced and sold the same things? | | Yes | I produce the same crops, we get the seedling from the department. If we need variation we have to either buy or ask the other farmers for seedlings. |
|  | |  | If She buys her own seed but that is an additional cost. |
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| RQ13: How did you start farming? | I have a small patch of land in the yard that I use for growing cabbage and maize. | | |
| RQ14: How did you learn about this opportunity? | In 2018, together with other farmers, I received training from the agriculture SETA. I was paid a stipend during training. I have always been curious about growing my own food, so I listen to radio shows on farming. | | |
| RQ15: Where did you obtain the capital?  RQ16: What are the sources of your livelihoods?  RQ17: How do you support your family? | I used my own money, and later earnings from selling the produce. I use some of my children’s grant money.  I live from the earning of the farm, and the child support grant. I do get help from my elderly parents as and when it is needed.  I often take some of the produce home to prepare as relish, it brings the family costs down. | | |
| RQ19: How many people are employed, temporary and full-time? | There are three of us members of the cooperative, full time, we get additional as and when required, 3-5 sometimes. The other women have older children who come to help. | | |
| RQ20: What are your main inputs? | Seedlings, water, pesticides, fertilizers, nets, and improvised equipment. The work is labour-intensive. We sometimes use our own money to repair the nets when they are damaged, it takes a long time for the department to react. | | |
| RQ21: Where do you get your inputs from? Mainly from the Agripark, but the transport they have to hire themselves. During Covid-19 we had to go and buy from corporative, it was expensive.  Where do you sell? Community stalls, bakkie off-takers and door-to-door sales. We use crates and boxes, there is no branding. | | | |
| RQ22: What do you supply? | |  | Tomatoes, kale, pepper bells, carrots, and lettuce. |
| * How often? | |  | weekly |
| * How did you get the market? | |  | Buyers come here, it’s word-of-mouth advertising. |
| * Are produce collected or delivered? | |  | All are collected, except when doing door-to-door. We transport the products in taxis. |
| * What quantity or value of each crop produced? * What market works best, and why? | |  | It is unstable, it depends on the yield, which is sometimes good or bad. We get reasonable returns.  We are happy with our current, we sell to local people whom we know and respect our efforts. of course, when there is growth in our farming we will adjust to other markets. |
| * What could be done to make markets work better? | |  | We have not been exposed to the market beyond what we currently have. We will need the training to go to big markets, it looks difficult. |
| * Have you sold your product elsewhere before, if so, where? | | No |  |
| RQ23: Are you part of an organization or group? No. I only work with members of the cooperative, there is an informal support network within the Agripark.   * Do you have any other collaboration, individual or group? No.   RQ24: What concerns and issues have arisen concerning the Agripark? How have they been resolved? I’m sceptical of the Agriparks and the capacity of government to change our lives for the better, at a time when we badly need the state in the face of economic challenges. particularly for low-income black farmers, women, and youth, still working to overcome the nation’s racial wealth gap that accounts for much of the nation’s inequality in agriculture and employment. I do not see change unless the government takes land redistribution and the development of black farmers seriously.  RQ25: What improvement has been brought? None of the promises of reconstructing agrarian relations and improving living standards, improving black farmers’ prospects, and improving agricultural subsidies has happened.  RQ26: In what way can Agriparks be improved, any suggestions? We must never stop speaking up on the damage poor land redistribution is doing to black people, the economy, society, and culture. We need land and the state to fund black farmers. | | | |
| * Has then been any changes in your farming? | |  | Initially, we lost members of the cooperative. Because of Agripark’s support, there is an improvement in the quality and quantity of products. Our income has improved because we don’t have to spend much on fertilizer and seeds. |
| * 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? | |  | Mostly from the radio, tv, and community, it was described as dangerous to society.  I struggled during the first lockdown, I had no income. I had a family to feed and bills to pay. We had to make adjustments in terms of what we eat and use.  I stayed at home with no income and reorganize family routines with children  We had to change the way we bought and consumed food, fresh produce was not a major challenge we still had a vegetable garden.  I did not apply for the grant, I was uncertain of the process. |
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Notes: There are several other traders in the Agripark, I could not talk to them (time limitation. There are covered tunnels owned by individual trades, called entrepreneurs farmers, these seem to do much better. According to the Agripark manager, the latter group has improved inputs, employs labour, have own refrigeration and storage. The manager was hard-pressed to explain why this group was benefitting from the Agripark, meant for incubation. There are observable differences between the cooperative farmers and the entrepreneurs, and different infrastructures. However, the private farmers reap the benefits of free land, water, and security, though they buy their own seed and water pipes.

I got the distinct impression that the Agripark managers were intimidated by the entrepreneurs, for instance, when I wanted to get into one of the tunnels they refused. Saying the owner was not there and did not want people to go into the tunnels. But I did that easily with cooperatives. I suspected these were influential individuals.

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