

Experiences of Extension Officers on the Provision of Agricultural Facilities to Rural Farmers towards Improving Agricultural Practice in South Africa

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Abstract : The extension officers are regarded as the key role players in the provision of agricultural facilities to farmers across the world. The government of South Africa has shown a commitment to provide extensive support to farmers by the means of disseminating information and other agricultural facilities. This qualitative study on the experiences of extension officers on the provision of agricultural facilities to rural farmers towards improving agricultural practice was conducted in Msinga Local Municipality. The data was collected through the use of semi-structured interviews with extension officers who were sampled using the purposive sampling method. The qualitative data was analysed through the use of content analysis. The critical part of the findings reveals that the availability of arable land for agricultural practice, availability of agricultural schemes and availability of proper functioning community gardens were indicators of the high level of agricultural practice in the Msinga area. Therefore, the extension officers from the municipality department have shown to provide the agricultural budget to support rural farmers. Whereas, the department of agriculture provides well knowledgeable staff to train farmers about the process of farming and how they can address issues of livestock and crop diseases and also adapting to issues of climate change. The rural farmers, however, find it very difficult to learn and put into practice things that were thought by extension officers during training. There is, therefore, a need for recruitment of more extension staff and the involvement of Non-Government Organizations to increase access to extension facilities to the farmers.

Keywords : agricultural facilities, agricultural practice, extension officers, rural farmers

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