
HOUSEHOLD AND NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA



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FOREWORD

In 1985 the University of Zimbabwe and Michigan State University initiated a Food Security Research Network for Southern Africa. The objectives of the network are to conduct research that informs policymakers about food security issues and to help strengthen the regional capacity for food policy analysis. The underlying premise of the network is that building excellence in research capacity for national policy analysis comes through experience. In practice, this requires a long-term commitment to analytical capacity building, consistency in funding, and constant interaction between researchers and policymakers.

The network has sponsored four annual conferences for network researchers, policymakers, SADCC officials, and representative of international and donor agencies. The aim of the conference is to share research findings, identify new research themes, and provide an opportunity for policy dialogue between regional researchers, policymakers, and government officials.

The 1988 conference brought together 110 participants who deliberated on 28 papers. In the Official Opening, Vice-Chancellor W.J. Kamba of the University of Zimbabwe highlighted the importance of including health related-issues as a component of food security; and Zimbabwe's Senior Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, and Development B.T.G. Chidzero outlined policy reform priorities for Southern Africa. Subsequent sessions focused on *SADCC's Food Security Programme, the Impact of Market Reform on Food Security, Food Security Policy Options, New Technology to Improve Food Security, Family Food Security Options in Low-Rainfall Areas, Expanding Agricultural Trade in the SADCC Region, Nutrition and Food Security, the Contribution of Small-Scale Rural Enterprises to Employment Generation and Food Security, and the Impact of Irrigation on Food Security.*

A highlight of the 1988 conference was the participation of five nutritionists from Zambia, Zimbabwe, Sweden, and the United States. The presence of the nutritionists stimulated formal and informal discussions on the food access side of the food security equation and drew attention to the need to initiate more research in this area.

A second highlight of the 1988 conference was the attention given to reducing barriers to expanded intraregional trade in the SADCC region. Results presented suggest that there appear to be substantial price and nonprice barriers to expanded trade. Nevertheless, there exist significant opportunities for expanding intraregional trade that can be realized through appropriate government initiatives.

This proceeding contains revised papers prepared under the sponsorship of the University of Zimbabwe/Michigan State University Food Security Research Project in Southern Africa and presented at the University of Zimbabwe's Fourth Annual Conference on Food Security Research in Southern Africa, held at the Holiday Inn, Harare, October 31-November 3, 1988.

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The Fourth Annual Conference on Food Security Research in Southern Africa provided an opportunity for regional researchers, policymakers, government officials, private sector participants, and donor representatives to share research results and experiences in improving food security in Southern Africa. The studies reported in the proceedings are part of a larger cooperative agreement project on food security in Sub-Saharan Africa that is directed by Michael Weber of Michigan State University's Department of Agricultural Economics. The UZ/MSU Food Security Research Programme is being carried out in conjunction with the Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension, University of Zimbabwe.

Many individuals and institutions have contributed to making the conference a success. We extend our gratitude to the authors of the research papers for their intellectual contributions to the debate on improving food security in Southern Africa; and to the policymakers, private sector participants, government officials, and donor representatives for attending the conference and sharing their insights on the critical issues raised.

The Food Security Research Project has benefitted from the generous support of Sam Muchena and John Dhlwayo, of the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, and Rural Resettlement (Zimbabwe). In their roles as leaders of SADCC's Food Security Administrative and Technical Unit, they have been particularly helpful in planning the annual conference and identifying relevant research themes that complement SADCC's Food Security Programme.

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SMALL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL SWAZILAND: CURRENT STATUS AND RESEARCH NEEDS

P.M. Dlamini¹

INTRODUCTION

There is increasing international concern over the shortfall in food production in Africa. However, there is another issue that has yet not been fully explored--the issue of access to food. A critical question is the role of rural small enterprises in generating rural employment and income as a means of increasing access to food. The tie between rural enterprise development and food production in Swaziland has been examined by Magagula (1980), de Vletter (1984), Carloni (1982), McCann (1981,) and Neocosmos (1985).

The government of Swaziland is promoting small rural enterprises because of the realization that only a fraction of the annual additions to the labour force can be productively employed in urban areas and farming because of the large numbers of business that are owned by expatriates.

This paper explores and describes existing small rural enterprises in Swaziland. The definition of a small rural enterprise usually includes capital levels, labour and employment levels, ratio of capital to labour, ownership structure, control and responsibility, and legality. Brown (1987) defines a small enterprise as an inseparable entity from the individual.

COMMERCIALIZATION IN RURAL SWAZILAND

Despite its small size, Swaziland is a country of great diversity. For example, the country is characterized by a dual system of traditional and modern ministries.² The second contrast is found in the dual form of land tenure. The Swazi Nation Land (SNL)³ comprises 57% of the total land and Individual Tenure Farms (ITF) comprise 43%. There are about 850 ITFs, ranging from family units of 20-40 hectares to large agro-industrial estates of 15,000 hectares and more.

¹Department of Agricultural Economics and Management, University of Swaziland.

²The Supreme Head of the Swazi Nation is the King, who exercises authority in the modern government through a Council of Ministers and in the traditional government through the Swazi National Council (SNC).

³Swazi Nation Land falls under the control of the SNC and it is land vested in the King in trust for the Swazi Nation. This land cannot be individually owned, *i.e.*, all citizens are entitled to a piece which is allocated by chiefs governing the communal land tenure system.

Nonagricultural enterprises

Swazi Nation Land supports about 2,000 Swazi nonagricultural enterprises which have been established primarily without any outside assistance. About 80% of these are small retail traders. The remainder are almost entirely small transport operators, or small service enterprises such as shoe repairers, carpenters, casual builders, beer brewing, and craftsmen.

Promotion of small enterprises

The government is well aware of the need to develop small enterprises. New sections have been set up in the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Tourism to promote small enterprises. These sections are the Small Enterprises Development Company (SEDCO) and the Swazi Craft Limited--both of which were set up in 1970 with the aid of UNDP technical assistance. The third is the Swaziland Industrial Development Company which assists small and large businesses.

In promoting handicrafts, SEDCO assists firms by:

- o creating jobs within small-scale industries;
- o setting up a market to assist small-scale industrialists;
- o assisting small-scale industries with loans and investigating ways of obtaining raw materials; and
- o guiding and assisting small entrepreneurs and handicraft producers to prepare and submit applications for financial assistance from SEDCO.

Swazi Crafts Limited, on the other hand, purchases handicrafts from rural areas such as Swazi rugs (commonly called Swazi mats, made from flexible grass which grows on mountains), table mats, necklaces, and many other products. Since Swazi Crafts is a non-profitmaking organization, the women are thus encouraged to produce more goods and improve the quality of their produce. Swazi Crafts Limited has also set up depots throughout the country which are used by the women for storage.

Handicrafts production is important because it provides employment for men, women, and girls in the rural areas. In fact, as far as the employment situation is concerned, it is common for people to rely on their handicrafts to make ends meet, even while they are in the process of seeking other employment. Once employment is found, these people will still employ their leisure time on handwork.

Role of nonfarm activities

Many small farmers and unemployed individuals depend on nonfarm activities to subsist. Nonfarm activities are also important in rural development. For example, agricultural products are traded, transformed, and transported. Tools and light equipment have to be repaired and roads, dams, dykes, storage, and houses have to be constructed. All these activities help the rural population to improve their level of income. These activities are also more labour-intensive than comparable activities in the urban areas. In addition, they also produce more employment per unit of capital. Liedholm and Chuta (1976) concluded that there is an economic justification

to promote nonfarm activities because they will increase rural incomes and help diminish migration towards urban centres.

Sources of rural income

A survey by Russel (1986) identified six sources of income for people living in rural areas (Table 1).

The main sources were farming, employment and nonfarming enterprises. Russel also found that over one-half of the land owners had nonagricultural enterprises on their land. Most of these enterprises were run by the landowners themselves, using hired and family workers (Table 2).

The final subset of the population is defined as the investors. These are classified on the basis of the homestead head being a professional or a skilled technician. From national surveys, 30 homesteads were classified as investors.

ASSISTING RURAL ENTERPRISES

Table 1. Sources of income to landowners, Swaziland, 1986.

Source	Percentage
Farming only	7
Farming with nonfarming enterprises	42
Farming, with employment	10
Farming, with employment and non-farming enterprises	24
Employment only	14
Nonfarming enterprises only	3

Source: Russel (1986) p. 28.

Table 2. Enterprises established on rural holdings, Swaziland, 1986.

	General dealer	Butchery	Bottle store	Specialised wholesaler	Other	Total
Own Enterprise	5	2	0	2	3	12
Premises rented out	3	1	2	0	2	8
Total	8	3	2	2	5	20

na = data not available.

Source: Russell (1986) p. 31

Small rural enterprises have started mushrooming in many rural areas of Swaziland. The common feature of most of the smallholder enterprises is the control which business and agribusiness wields over the conditions of smallholder production through the monopoly which it holds over markets. In order to promote this kind of enterprise, it would appear imperative for the government to pay special attention to this group of people and to devote larger portions of the remaining land still awaiting to be purchased to smallholders.

It has also been noted that small-scale nonfarm activities have tended to support the major rural activity, farming. Lack of government support for these enterprises has posed serious unemployment problems in the rural areas. Marketing constraints for small rural enterprises has also discouraged potential small businesses. The government has a tendency of buying from foreign and larger companies products and services that could be provided by local small businesses.

The author commends the growing practice of involving women in farming and nonfarm activities. The most obvious contribution by the youth is at learning institutions, mostly organized by church missions, such as the Mdzimba Young Farmers Training Scheme, St. Mary's School of Appropriate Farming Technology and the Usuthu Mission Young Farmers Cooperative. Training in nonfarm activities is provided at several centres such as the St. Phillips Knitting School, Entonjeni Women Centre, Kadvokolwako Centre, the Manzini Institute of Technology (MITC) for both farming and nonfarm activities, the Vocational College at Matsapha (VOCTIM), and the Swaziland College of Technology (SCOT).

Emphatic action is needed to formulate a land policy which would encourage the schemes described in this paper. Various land tenure studies in Swaziland have generally addressed the question of whether or not the existing form of customary tenure provides a sound legal environment for intensive agricultural advancement by smallholder producers. Some of the studies concluded that the present approach is conducive enough. However, the author believes there is a need to overhaul the tenure system or a need for innovation and variation in the production structure on Swazi Nation Land.

The government should also make special efforts in directing institutional procurement towards small rural enterprise, developing industrial estates--especially those which stress linkages between small and large enterprises--cautiously encouraging sub-contracting by large schemes to small enterprises, improving access to credit facilities, and devising methods of improving the managerial skill of small rural enterprises.

RESEARCH NEEDS

Swaziland is experiencing a difficult economic situation that is compounded by drought and floods, reduced investment, and depressed world markets. Although Swaziland has one of the highest ratios of paid employment to the working age population in Sub-Saharan Africa (29% in 1982), the growth in paid employment has not kept pace with the growth in the working age population. This trend of increasing unemployment will likely continue, due to the high population growth rate

formal and nonformal sector jobs are needed. Making small rural enterprises viable could be an important, effective component of the overall governmental strategy.

Recent studies of small rural enterprises have failed to identify many of the constraining factors because most have been too descriptive in nature. There has been little rigorous analysis of the sources and magnitudes of food insecurity in Swaziland. A detailed investigation into this problem is long overdue.

There is a need for a survey of small-scale enterprises to determine production capabilities, profitability levels, and the social aspects of these small enterprises. Research should also explore the extent of processing and manufacturing in the sampled areas. Specific enterprises that need to be investigated include cottage industries and arts such as beer brewing; bricks construction and the construction industry as a whole; pottery; tailoring; carpentry; and all kinds of handicrafts goods. The other aspect of this study should focus on the service sector such as shoe repairs, vegetable traders, government personnel services, and transport.

In summary, research should focus at the household level where there is a need to examine both farm and nonfarm activities. Second, there is a need to explore the dynamics of the small enterprise sector to better understand its growth potential and transformation during the course of development.

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