

# **Revitalization of Irrigation Schemes in the Sekhukhune District to Commercialize Crop Production**



**“HELP FOR ME WITHOUT ME IS NOT REALY FOR ME”**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study was undertaken by a team comprised of five staff members from both the Agricultural Research Council and Limpopo Department of Agriculture (LDA), participating in the Agricultural Research for Development (ARD) learning programme, at the Tompi Seleka Farmer Development Centre.

The study was conducted in the Sekhukhune district of Limpopo Province, to identify opportunities for commercializing crop production in Elandskraal, Krokodil, Phetwane, Mogalatsane and Setlaboswane irrigation schemes.

The analysis of the various irrigation schemes led to the conclusion, that there is dichotomy on the views on commercialization at the various schemes as well as negative perceptions of manner in which LDA introduced the strategy by the farmers. The farmers felt much needs to be done before their farming units could be economically viable. This would need to include; providing assistance to secure farming resources, improving farming infrastructure, capacity building to enhance technical and business skills and providing incentives to promote youth participation as crucial steps in setting up a comprehensive development programme for the schemes.

The study therefore recommends improved access to production resources and strengthening of local structures to enable the farming enterprises to realize the anticipated commercial potential. It was also strongly suggested that, a basket of options for commercializing the farm units be presented to farmers, to accommodate the diversity of the farmers in the irrigation scheme. The study also identified a need to have strong coordination in the economic development of schemes by service providers and all stakeholders through a forum.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background and justification

The study was undertaken by a group of four staff members of the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) and a member of the Limpopo Department of Agriculture (LDA) as part of the process to develop capacity in Agricultural Research for Development (ARD) procedures. The study was to identify opportunities for the commercialization of crop production in the Sekhukhune district, Limpopo Province in order to lead to improved household livelihoods in the district.

### Methodology

The study followed the ARD procedure developed by ICRA. The procedure includes the organization of a multidisciplinary team, the clarification of the problem in its development context as well as the identification of development strategies. The procedure involves frequent interaction with all relevant stakeholders to bring about sustainable development. The team used mind-mapping to identify key elements to the study. More information was obtained from both primary and secondary data sources in the form of semi-structured interviews, key informant interviews as well as from maps and direct observation respectively.

### Key findings

The study established the following important points:

***Creation of a common vision*** - The communities are heterogenous and therefore, inventiveness and sensitive facilitation of the various typologies of the various stakeholders is warranted in dealings with farmers from all the schemes.

***Commercialization*** - The various views on commercialization and associated perceptions warrant re-visiting strategies used to entice farmers on the concepts. There should be flexibility in the LDA's approach, should offer other alternatives for those not keen on collectivizing resources or cooperation to commercialize.

***Flag Elandskraal*** - The Elandskraal farmers understand the commercialization concept and despite the dichotomy prevalent, it could be worthwhile to consider strengthening some of the weaker groups through having them work in conjunction with the Elandskraal association.

***Improved soil management*** - Observations at the schemes pointed to a huge variability in soil depth implying varying irrigation scheduling practices for the various irrigation blocks.

***Improved access to input supply and resources*** - At the moment, there is a vacuum with regards to service providers at the schemes and there is a need to identify potential credit providers that will service the schemes and provide production loans.

***Improved coordination amongst stakeholders*** - There is currently no coordination in service provision and collaboration amongst stakeholders working at the schemes. It is important that such collaboration is established, through a designated forum. The forum would need to be guided by a jointly developed action plan, tailored to suit the needs of each scheme.