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DECLARATION

I, Zuzeka Prudence Mkra, hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work. It has not been submitted to this or any other university for any degree before.

I also declare that all sources cited in the study (as verbatim quotes, paraphrases, or summaries) have been correctly and fully acknowledged by complete references, and that the responsibility for doing so, as directed by my supervisor and in terms of the University's policy on plagiarism, is my responsibility and mine alone. I absolve my supervisor and the university of any responsibility should this later be proved otherwise.

Zuzeka Prudence Mkra

Date: _____

DEDICATION

To my family and to the loving memory of my brother Sipehelele Mkra, I know how proud you would have been.

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I thank God, for his love and blessings; I thank Him for holding my hand and being my guide.

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ABSTRACT

The study explores youth perspectives regarding their participation in agriculture and its future in Centane, a rural community in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. The study examines, firstly, the extent to which the assumption that youth lack interest in agriculture is evident in the study community. Secondly, it explores the extent to which youth involvement or the lack thereof defines the future of agriculture in the study community. The third research concern is the extent to which the relevant state-led agricultural policies support youth involvement in rural agriculture.

This is against the background that unemployment is rife in Africa, with extensive social and economic consequences, yet appears not to have been vigorously tackled by the government. There is also a scholarly view that rural youths “lack interest” in agriculture. The study used both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, specifically a mini survey, focus groups, in-depth and key informant interviews, and observation.

The key findings of the study showed that there was widespread lack of youth involvement in agriculture in the study community. However, contrary to what the literature on this theme often supposes, this was more as a result of the absence of specific ‘incentives’ and resources, than as a result of a “lack of interest” in agriculture. The study also found that despite the high level of acknowledgment in the study community that the youth were “turning away” from agriculture, and the researcher’s observation that arable fields in and around the community lay uncultivated, the overall youth perception of rural agriculture could not be described as negative. Another important finding was that key informants in the relevant government departments acknowledged that government was not providing sufficient support to spur youth involvement in agriculture.

The study concludes from these findings that rural agriculture is seriously imperiled, but not irredeemably so.

Keywords: Rural agriculture, youth empowerment, rural youth, Eastern Cape, South Africa, Centane Community.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AgriBEE	Agricultural Black Economic Empowerment
ANC	African National Congress
AYDI	Agriculture Youth Development Initiative
CASP	Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme
DRDLR	Department of Rural Development and Land Reform
DBSA	Development Bank of South Africa
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FANRPAN	Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network's
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IGNOU	Indira Gandhi National Open University
ISRDS	Integrated and Sustainable Rural Development Strategy
IYPS	Integrated Youth Development Strategy
NDA	National Department of Agriculture
Narysec	National Rural Youth Service Corps
NAF	National Agro Foundation
NYC	National Youth Commission
NYDA	National Youth Development Agency
NGOs	Non Governmental Organizations
SADC	Southern African Development Community
YARD	Youth in Agriculture and Rural Development

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUPERVISOR'S STATEMENT.....	ii
DECLARATION.....	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	v
ABSTRACT	vi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
List of Figures.....	xi
List of Tables.....	xi
List of Plates	xi
CHAPTER 1.....	1
OVERVIEW	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 The research problem	4
1.3 Research questions.....	5
1.4 Research aim and objectives.....	5
1.5 Theoretical framework.....	6
1.6 Significance of the Study	9
1.7 Institutional and policy framework for rural agriculture in South Africa.....	9
CHAPTER 2.....	13
THE YOUTH AND RURAL AGRICULTURE – LITERATURE REVIEW	13
2.1 Introduction	13
2.2 Rural poverty and agricultural programmes.....	13
2.3 Agriculture in other countries	14
2.4 Accommodating the youth in agriculture	16
2.5 Commercial farming	17
2.6 Agricultural production	19
2.7 Lack of youth participation in agriculture.....	22
2.8 Conclusion	23
CHAPTER 3.....	24

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	24
3.1 Introduction	24
3.2 Research design.....	24
3.2.1 Reliability.....	25
3.2.2 Validity.....	26
3.3 Methodology and data collection methods.....	27
3.3.1 Qualitative approach.....	27
3.3.2 Quantitative approach	27
3.4 Data collection.....	30
3.4.1 Focus groups.....	30
3.4.2 In-depth Interviews	31
3.4.3 Questionnaires	32
3.5 Sampling.....	32
3.6 Analysis of data	34
3.5 Ethics.....	34
3.6 Summary.....	35
CHAPTER 4.....	36
CENTANE COMMUNITY - A PORTRAIT	36
4.1 Introduction	36
4.2 Social and ethnographic profile	37
4.3 Local economy and livelihoods.....	39
4.4 Community resources	41
4.5 Conclusion	48
CHAPTER 5.....	49
RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	49
5.1 Introduction	49
5.2 Respondent characteristics	50
5.3 Present levels of youth participation in rural agriculture	54
5.4 Local perspectives about the place of the youth in rural agriculture.....	59
5.4.1 Narratives about ‘lack of interest’ in agriculture	60
5.4.2 Perceptions about the role and future of agriculture.....	64
5.4.3 Levels of government support for youth participation in rural agriculture.....	75
5.5 Conclusion	79
CHAPTER 6.....	80

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION	80
6.1 Introduction	80
6.2 Summary of findings.....	80
6.2.1 Between ‘involvement’ and ‘interest’	80
6.2.2 Local narratives and perceptions	81
6.2.3 Government policy and youth involvement in agriculture	82
6.3 Discussion.....	83
6.4 Recommendations.....	86
6.5 Conclusion	88
REFERENCES	90
APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE	96
MINI SURVEY ON RURAL YOUTH.....	96
Educational Attainment:	96

List of Figures

Figure 1: Map of the Eastern Cape	37
Figure 2: Gender composition of survey sample.....	51
Figure 3: Educational attainments of youth-out-of-school survey sub-sample	52
Figure 4: Employment status of youth-out-of-school survey respondents	53
Figure 5: Youth seeking employment in non-agricultural sectors	70

List of Tables

Table 1: Congruence between research questions and research methods.....	28
Table 2: FGD participants	50
Table 3: In-depth interviewees	50
Table 4: Mini-survey respondents	51
Table 5: Characteristics of interview respondents: Other community members.....	53
Table 6: youth agricultural involvement.....	54
Table 7: Likert scale responses about farm ownership by the youth	56
Table 8: Likert scale responses about lack of interest in agriculture	60
Table 9: Likert scale responses about agricultural activities as time-consuming.....	62
Table 10: Likert scale responses - Agriculture as an appealing field	63
Table 11: Table 10: Likert scale responses: Agriculture as a dirty activity	63
Table 12: Likert scale responses about youth and agricultural activities	64
Table 13: Likert scale responses about death of agriculture.....	67
Table 14: Likert scale responses about agriculture being for old people.....	68
Table 15: Likert scale responses about the future of rural agriculture in the Province	72
Table 16: Likert scale responses about the future of agriculture in Centane.....	72
Table 17: Youth perceptions about the role of government support in youth participation in rural agriculture.....	75

List of Plates

Plate 1: Agriculture abandoned	41
Plate 2: Source of water for household use (1).....	43
Plate 3: Source of water for household use (2)	44
Plate 5: Livestock ownership dwindling?	46
Plate 6: Typical homesteads and house types	47
Plate 7: Cabbage garden	57
Plate 8: Plate 2: Spinach and maize garden.....	58
Plate 9: Livestock - Goats	59
Plate 10: Local youth being active in other activities	65
Plate 11: Abundant, unplanted fields.....	74

CHAPTER 1 OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

In most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, agriculture is the most important economic activity. It employs a significant proportion of the population across all age groups and remains vitally important to the economy, with 638 000 people formally employed and 8.5 million people estimated to be directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture for their income (Stats SA, 2012). In the rural areas in particular, lives and livelihoods revolve around (subsistence) crop and livestock farming. This is why, in South Africa, there is a belief in government circles that agriculture can be used to reverse the spiral of rural unemployment, stimulate the rural economy, stem the tide of rural-urban migration and check the high incidence of rural crime, violence and hopelessness (White, 2012: 3).

Youth unemployment in South Africa is high, almost 70% of the youth are unemployed (Dangor, 2012). Youth, particularly those in the rural areas, are the future of the agricultural sector. With a growing world population, decreasing agricultural productivity, and rural-urban migration, sustainable food production and supply are threatened (Dangor, 2012), hence rural (youth) voices are needed in policy formulation.

As White (2012) has pointed out, while unemployment and underemployment affect both rural and urban areas, these problems are more severe in rural communities than in urban areas. Since the early 1990s the South African government has introduced several agricultural interventions to rejuvenate the rural economy and correct the structural imbalances that persist from the apartheid era. These include the enhancement of food security (in the face of the challenges faced by South Africa in meeting its national food requirements) and the elimination of poverty that is made apparent by unstable food production (Pinstrup-Andersen et al., 2001: 22). The government has even implemented an integrated food security strategy (2002) whose main goal is to ensure that the rural poor gain access to income and job opportunities to enhance their ability to purchase food and access agricultural productive resources

(www.agis.agric.za). Providing a conducive environment for increasing agricultural productivity and economic returns also falls under the intervention strategies promoted by the South African government. This is one of the critical elements when it comes to sustaining food production, and is aimed at improving the living conditions of rural communities by, among other things, providing assistance to small farmers to access to land. Micro agricultural financial institutions in South Africa also contribute to government's overall commitment towards assisting rural communities (Brown, 2012).

Despite these interventions, there is a persisting challenge of transforming the rural economy through rural agriculture, and this, among other factors, presents a threat to the fight against rural unemployment and rural poverty. While some scholars have blamed the relative low impact of these interventions on a "top-down" policy design and policy implementation approach, as well as inappropriate targeting (Phiri, 2009: 19; White, 2012; Bryceson, 2002), others have cited "lack of interest" among the youth in rural agriculture as a major problem (Food Agriculture & Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN), 2012; Akpan, 2010). FANRPAN (2012: 9) argues that the struggle for rural food security in Africa is a struggle in which youth "must be regarded as critical agricultural players who need and deserve special attention, support and follow-up". This argument is in line with Bryceson's (2002: 14) observation that in the past "school children used to assist in farm work after school hours whereas today they show no interest in agriculture and are increasingly drawn into trading activities".

South Africa looks at its youth as valued assets with the potential of making invaluable contributions to society, and has targeted a number of interventions at this sector. To feed the growing populations in the developing world, the role of the youth in agriculture is important (Kirsten and Vink, 2003). The South African National Youth Policy (2009-2014) has a goal to intentionally enhance the capacities of young people through addressing their needs, promoting positive outcomes, and providing an integrated, coordinated package of services, opportunities, choices, relationships and support necessary for the holistic development of all young people, particularly those outside the social, political and economic mainstream.

It is against this background that this study looked at the future of rural agriculture in the Eastern Cape through the eyes of those who, according to some scholars, “lack interest” in rural agriculture. The key question for the researcher was: Is there any empirical basis for the suggestion that the youth “lack interest” in rural agriculture, and if so, what can be done to change the situation? Above all, what does youth involvement – or the lack of it – spell for the future of agriculture in the Eastern Cape, assuming the empirical data from the community study has given us some indication of such a future? This is a study of youth perspectives on rural agriculture, conducted in Centane, a rural farming community, near Butterworth, part of the Mnquma Municipality in the Eastern Cape.

The study adopts the definition of youth as outlined in the South African National Youth Policy (2009-2014). Youth refers to young people who fall between the ages of 14 to 35. This official definition is said to be based on the National Youth Commission Act 1996 and the National Youth Policy 2000. In terms of the South African National Youth Policy, the country has a youth population which is about 41% of its entire population of just over 50.5 million.

The South African National Youth Policy (2009-2014) looks at the rural youth as the young women and men facing particular constraints with regard to both accessibility and availability of services and facilities. This means that the youth in rural areas receive fewer employment and information opportunities than the youth in urban areas. The youth policies have shown great concern over the migration of youth to urban areas. Statistics S.A. (2007) points out that the Gauteng Province has the highest proportion of youth population (22.7%) compared to the Eastern Cape, which has a youth population of 12.6%, and Limpopo, which has a youth population of 10.4%. This can serve as evidence of youth migration from rural areas to urban areas in search of better opportunities.

For this study youths between the ages of 18 and 35 years of age were targeted. This was further segmented into in-school youth and out-of-school youth (that is, both those who have completed high school all those who dropped out of school).

1.2 The research problem

As stated earlier, the problem highlighted in this study revolves around youth involvement in agriculture and how it reflects on the future of rural agriculture. What remains crucial, however, is that despite existing arguments, youth continues to play a less effective role in rural agriculture. The Policy Brief (2010) states that with an increasingly globalised world with fast evolving communication and media technology, the youth in rural areas are becoming more aware of urban-rural inequalities and aspire to standards of living not typically associated with agricultural livelihoods.

Studies of youth in relation to agriculture are largely based on youth lacking interest in rural agriculture, paying little attention to the reasons that the youth give for the lack of interest. To date there has been little empirical research in South Africa on youth involvement in agriculture but the studies that do exist lend support to the notion that the youth turn away from agriculture not simply as a result of poor economic returns or lack of access to factors of production (such as land). In Tanzania, for example, the youth reportedly regard farming as a dirty activity that does not have proper facilities, while in South Africa teenage girls point to the low status ascribed to farm children compared to children living in towns and villages. The Farmers' Forum Youth session (2012: 3) states that many young people have a stereotyped vision of agriculture and see farming as a hard physical job. Hence there is a need to improve the image of agriculture. This could be the result of national policies that do not make agriculture attractive to the youth. The lack of respect towards farmers and the lack of role models and leaders among young farmers also appear as reasons to not pursue a future in agriculture.

The views and narratives of the youth are important for an understanding of their attitudes towards agriculture. Youth are being framed as the saviours of under-nutrition to the many other framings and narratives that place the youth in the role of saviours (of the agriculture sector) or sinners (the youth is too lazy for agriculture, and are idle and unemployed). This study sheds light on the narratives and views of the youth towards agriculture and its future, and suggests that policymakers need to think beyond the conception of youth as units of labour to be placed in jobs. What could be done is to engage and empower youth in agriculture, as the sector needs to be able to address

youth aspirations and their expectations and offer the potential for societal flexibility in agriculture (Leavy, 2013).

A study on rural youth perceptions helps in understanding the ways in which the youth see agriculture and their possible reasons for turning away from agriculture in this time of mass rural unemployment and underemployment, White (2012), studying the youth helps to provide a reminder of the need and the right for the youth to be consulted when national policies are being formulated. Kirsten & Vink (2003) state that agriculture is an important provider of food for urban and rural consumers and it is an important source of income, employment and traction, especially for large numbers of poor people in the developing world. Recognizing the opportunity that comes from agriculture would be good for the country and its youth.

1.3 Research questions

The following research questions are answered in this study:

- i. To what extent is the assumption that youth 'lack interest' in agriculture evident in the study community?
- ii. How does youth involvement, or 'lack of interest' in agriculture, define the future of agriculture in the Centane region?
- iii. To what extent are relevant rural agricultural policies supportive of youth involvement in rural agriculture?

1.4 Research aim and objectives

The central aim of the study is to understand youth perspectives on rural agriculture in Centane Community – the role of government support, and the future of agriculture in the community. The specific objectives are as follows:

- i. To determine the extent of youth's interest in agriculture;
- ii. To determine how youth's interest, and/or actual involvement, in agriculture defines agriculture in the study community;

- iii. To examine the extent of youth-focused agricultural support in the study community.

1.5 Theoretical framework

This section discusses the theoretical and conceptual framework that was developed based on the literature review to inform the design of the study and address the research questions outlined above. In this context, the concepts that needed to be developed and explained related to the overall question of youth empowerment and the policies used to address youth involvement in rural agriculture. The study drew insights from Empowerment Theory and Constructivism.

Empowerment theory arose from the modernist school of thought which sought to empower people of different age groups based on their needs. Lerner (1986) speaks of two types of power that man holds to make them powerful or powerless. He states that there is real powerlessness and surplus powerlessness. Real powerlessness, which the rural youth could be going under, is either a result of economic inequities and oppressive control exercised by the systems of government or other people. While, surplus powerlessness on the other hand, is an internalised belief that change cannot occur, a belief which results in apathy and an unwillingness of the person to struggle for more control and influence.

This study therefore used this theory to examine the possibility of youth empowerment through agricultural programmes. The theory's emphasis on empowerment, with specific reference to youth's assumed lack of motivation to take part in rural agriculture, therefore gives an angle which allows the researcher to interrogate this assumption. Power may be defined as the "capacity of some persons and organizations to produce intended, foreseen and unforeseen effects on others" (Cornell Empowerment Group, 1989: 2). This model is based on the belief that everything possible should be done to restore power to the marginalized through validation and celebration of their strengths. According to Wilkinson (1998), society is generally viewed as unjust and unequal, therefore only a few control it, in this case the government. The youth could be empowered by contributing to economic development through agricultural programmes;

of which these programmes stem from strategic inclusive agricultural policies by the government that are aimed at restoring power to the marginalized as purported by this theory.

The main facet of the empowerment theory that has applicability to this study is its illumination of the empowering role of rural agriculture. Such empowerment, arguably, could be done through the agricultural programmes that are designed for rural youth. The basic values of the model are that young people are helped to address power imbalances in society without disempowering other disadvantaged groups. The realization of the youths' role in agriculture necessitates the need not only for agricultural programmes and funds, but also the need for them to be empowered to take part in such programmes, and the facilitators of these agricultural programmes would be responsible for driving youth empowerment. Such youth agricultural programmes by the government can be formulated better with the adoption of empowerment model as an informing theory, which will help the youth to be drawn into agriculture. As Rappaport (1987: 119) points out, empowerment should aim to enhance the possibilities for people to control their own lives.

The empowerment model seeks to return a sense of personal self-worth which, in this case, can be achieved through listening to the youth and allowing them to make their own choices, and supporting them through the process of moving towards participation in rural agriculture (Bessant et al., 1998). Morell (2004) also states that empowerment can be achieved through strengthening, capacitating and increasing of personal, interpersonal and political views of the youth will be recognized. The youth become empowered by being given access to information and resources to make proper decisions about their future, to learn skills for improving their personal or group power, and to change others' perceptions by democratic means. Young people need to be seen as partners and participants in the decision-making processes that determine programme goals, planning and/or implementation of policies. To have power, the youth should be the ones to identify the problems and solutions to personal and community issues and should have direct access to funding that is in place for them in the agricultural sector.

Empowerment is a process that allows one to gain the knowledge, skill and attitude needed to cope with the changing world and the circumstances in which one lives. Empowering the youth is an attitudinal, structural, and cultural process whereby young people gain the ability, authority, and agency to make decisions and implement change in their own lives and the lives of other people. According to Stewart (1994), empowerment is a process of strengthening which gives individuals, organisations and communities control over their own situation and their environment through encouraging participation. Through empowerment the youths' cultural identity and transformation in their cultural values will improve their flexibility. Strengthening of cultural education in schools, policies and in the community may eventually attract more young people to enter careers related to agriculture.

The study adopted the empowerment and constructivism approaches as its point of departure in addressing the research problem. The basic principle behind constructivism is that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and is the result of social processes (Gergen, 1995). Constructivism believes that social reality and social structures are influenced by people's active role in constructing them, and they change as people and their societies change (Bryman, 2001). People change when their societies influence the change. It is typically contrasted with *objectivism*, which holds that "social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social actors" (Bryman, 2001), and that the structures surrounding the social world are objective things that are not influenced by humans or other social forces.

Constructivists believe that people construct their own understanding of the world through experiences and reflecting on those experiences. When human beings encounter new things, they have to connect them with their previous ideas and experiences (McKay, 1993), which may cause them to change what they believe or to abandon the new information as inappropriate. With the realization of how much empowerment they can get through agriculture, the youth can alter their perception and attitude towards agriculture.

Human beings can and do influence the social world, and categories and concepts within society can be considered to be socially constructed, for instance, the notion of youth interest in agriculture is created by society and the people within it, and it has changed over time. The adoption of the two theoretical framings is informed by the researcher's view that empowerment is necessary for development to take place and people change when their society changes, and that there is nothing static about the way rural agriculture subsists at the moment. Through active youth involvement and state intervention, the social worlds can change and agriculture can play the transformative role that it is capable of playing.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study makes the important contribution that in this period of extremely rapid change and decline in agriculture, targeting youth, rather than only adults, may have more overall benefits in rural renewal than commonly imagined. This is both a theoretical and practical possibility. The study helps to bring out ideas that should influence and shape policies, programmes and development affecting the youth and their future, but also contribute to the growing scholarship on youth empowerment.

1.7 Institutional and policy framework for rural agriculture in South Africa

In 1994, South Africa witnessed a change in its governance when the African National Congress (ANC) took over as the country's ruling party. Since then, attempts have been made by the state to address rural poverty, which is one of the biggest developmental problems (mostly inherited from the apartheid regime) the country is faced with. In trying to reverse the deep poverty that characterises much of rural and urban South Africa, the government realised the need to focus specific attention on the youth. Some of the policies formulated in this regard have targeted the agricultural sector.

The National Youth Commission Act, passed in 1996, identified a few issues that the country needed to put right in society with regard to youth empowerment. One vehicle for driving the envisaged change was the National Youth Commission (NYC). The Commission championed the development of an Integrated National Youth Development Plan that utilises available resources and expertise for youth

development. Some of the objectives of the National Youth Commission Act were mirrored in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) Act 19 of 1996.

In 1998 a policy framework called Agriculture Youth Development Initiative (AYDI) was formulated through the National Department of Agriculture. The aim was to capture the interest of the youth – especially rural youth - encourage youth participation in agriculture, and create awareness about agriculture-related opportunities (The Agriculture Youth Development Initiative for South Africa, 1998). However, as the findings of this study (reported and discussed in two later chapters) it is unlikely that this programme can be judged as an unqualified success.

The National Youth Policy (2009-2014) was formulated as a further enabling tool for youth development. The Policy focused on young women, youth with disabilities, unemployed youth, aged- and out-of-school youth, youth in rural areas, and youth at risk. These are the categories the government felt needed special intervention. The Integrated and Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS) must also be mentioned among the policies meant to encourage youth development and boost active youth involvement in rural economic activities. The ISRDS identified rural towns, service centres and villages as special focal nodes, and paid particular attention to the role of agriculture in rural renewal. Yet, ISRDS could also be mentioned as one of the interventions that have not quite met the expectations of the rural youth, according to the findings of the present study – presented and discussed later.

In 2008 the government formulated the Land Affairs Youth Empowerment Strategy, with the aim of empowering rural communities to access agricultural land, infrastructure, and skills. Among the initiatives related to this Strategy was the Youth in Agriculture and Rural Development (YARD) which is driven by the Ministry for Agriculture and Land Affairs and aimed at encouraging the youth to stay in the agricultural sector. One of YARD's main goals was to improve the quality of life of rural families.¹

¹ <http://www.polity.org.za/article/d-peters-launch-of-the-provincial-youth-in-agriculture-and-rural-development-yard-18062008-2008-06-20> [Accessed 18 December, 2013]

The Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs identifies among its key roles the development of the country's youth through several programmes, among them: agricultural sector Black Economic Empowerment (AgriBEE), Land Care, mentorship, agri-focused micro-lending institution. All these are in line with the National Youth Development Policy Framework (2002-2007), which strongly advocates for integrated, holistic and comprehensive youth development.

In 2010-2011 the National Youth Development (NYDA), which derives its mandate from, among other legislative instruments, the NYDA Act 54 of 2008, announced that it would lead an all-out drive to tackle youth development. It was through the NYDA Act and the National Youth Policy 2009-2014 that the Integrated Youth Development Strategy (IYDS), a comprehensive implementation framework, was developed. Its aim was to assist the NYDA to rally all key governmental and non-governmental institutions towards initiating programmes that foster youth development. One of its key roles in this was to coordinate, monitor and evaluate such programmes.

In 2011 the National Rural Youth Service Corps (Narysec) programme was established as a rural youth-based skills development and job creation initiative. A product of the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR), Narysec is driven through a partnership between DRDLR and the Agricultural Research Council to turn thousands of rural youth into agri-paraprofessionals in smallholder livestock and dairy production, vegetable gardening and land administration. So far, the Department has invested over R631 million in various training programmes.² One of the main challenges this programme faces is that the recruitment of youth into the various training interventions is done through ward councillors – a process that exposes the entire initiative to local opportunism and manipulation, as discussed in detail in the Research Findings and Discussion chapters of this study.

On the whole it may be said that there is no dearth of youth-oriented, rural-focused policies and initiatives in South Africa. The problem is translating them into effective

² (<http://www.gov.za/aboutgovt/programmes/nrysc/> [Accessed 16 January, 2014])

engines of youth empowerment at the grassroots. As demonstrated in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 of this work, the views expressed by the youth in Centane community indicate that the impact of the various interventions is yet to be felt in all rural communities in the country.

CHAPTER 2

THE YOUTH AND RURAL AGRICULTURE – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature on rural poverty and rural youth empowerment in Africa in particular is replete with debates about the role of agriculture in reversing the spiral of rural decline. This chapter examines some of these debates. Special attention is paid to studies that focus on how the participation of the youth in agriculture can engender both their own empowerment and the overall upliftment of the rural sector. The chapter thus unpacks the current state of scholarship in this field and points to the knowledge gaps that still need to be filled.

2.2 Rural poverty and agricultural programmes

As noted in Chapter 1 (Section 1.7), the spectre of rural poverty that has hung over South Africa since the apartheid era has continued to do so, two decades into multi-racial democracy.

The democratic government has formulated multi-pronged policies and designed a plethora of land-related and agrarian programmes aimed at reversing the injustice of racially-based land dispossession of the past and tackling current problems of poverty, inequality and underdevelopment (Hall et al., 2003). Some related programmes, such as the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP), have sought to provide post-settlement support to both beneficiaries of land reform, and incentives to non-land reform beneficiaries who have an interest in establishing value-adding enterprises domestically or who are involved in the export of agricultural products (Department of Agriculture, 2005).

Some commentators have pointed out that although agriculture contributes to the economy of South Africa in an important way, its impact on the economy has witnessed a decline in recent years. For instance, focusing on the trends of land and agrarian reform post-1994, the FANRPAN (2012) Youth Policy Review notes that the while the

agricultural sector is still believed to be a major employer of labour in South Africa, its contribution to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is decreasing.

Indications are that grazing and livestock farming, which is by far the largest agricultural sector in the country, has taken advantage of the country's land surface which clearly favours this type of agriculture. The country has both well-developed commercial farming and subsistence-based production in the rural areas; however, lack of properly structured interventions such as incentives to engage and attract the youth to the agricultural sector is seen as setback. According to Juma (2007:2), the youth therefore place agriculture at the bottom of their scale of preference when it comes to making a career choice or seeking employment.

2.3 Agriculture in other countries

In countries such as China, agriculture has always been an important part of the people's lives. During the 1980s about two-thirds of the Chinese population lived in the rural areas and a large proportion of them made their living directly from farming (Maru, 2013). In the early 1980s the people in China were being encouraged to leave the rural areas and their fields to pursue other activities, such as handcrafts, commerce, factory work, and transport and by the mid-1980s farming had dropped to less than half of the value of rural output. Although the use of farm machinery has been increasing, for the most part the Chinese peasant depends on simple, non mechanized farming implements.

Maru speaks about the challenges that the field of agriculture is faced with as it seems as if the youth is not interested in agriculture. He says that agriculture can play a big role in helping the youth to take advantage of the economy and build a bright future for them. Agriculture would help provide a socially sustainable production that could help reduce inequalities, and how to gain recognition for individual and collective contributions. This could help the youth become leaders of change and innovation, opportunities for the youth and how youths can prepare to take advantage of the opportunities that arise in the current fields of agriculture which brings with it new

opportunities in making agriculture and farming sustainable in its entire meaning: feeding 9 billion population projected in 2050. When the views of the youth are understood and their needs considered, development policy and practice can support the needs and priorities of rural youth, on- or off-farm (Lewis, 2012).

China is also experiencing a rising number of rural youth are turning their back on small-scale agriculture. Limited access to markets, assets, finance and infrastructure in rural areas, coupled with rapid growth and opportunities in urban areas increasingly makes cities the obvious choice in the search for a better life. Wang (2012), points out that most rural areas are faced with little or no access to land, markets, finance and education, rural youth struggle to make small-scale agricultural activities profitable. Many are unemployed or work informally and often in unpaid, low-skilled, insecure and sometimes hazardous jobs.

India and many other countries seem to be facing the problems that are faced by other African countries. Majority of youth in India are living rural areas and opting to move to urban areas for better job opportunities. Therefore addressing the problem of rural poverty and youth being encouraged to take part in agriculture assumes urgency.

Govindarajan (2014), states that since its inception in 2000, National Agro Foundation (NAF) has been involved in a range of interventions mixture of technology, soil enrichment, efficient farm and water management, improved cattle development, functional literacy, rural sanitation and public health, human resource development, establishment of self-help groups particularly among youth and women, self-employment opportunities and facilitating institutional credit to address the problem of agricultural productivity in India. India is doing well in terms of encouraging the youth to take part in agriculture through their learning program that is offered to the youth by Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). Khare (2009), believes that through the programmes offered by IGNOU, the creation of awareness and promotion of entrepreneurial skills among rural youth has made a huge difference in the number of youth take part in agriculture. The programmes offered by IGNOU endeavour to enhance the professional competency of the rural youth in the region and transforming them into agricultural entrepreneurs.

2.4 Accommodating the youth in agriculture

Studies have shown that agricultural production plays a crucial role in influencing the living standard of many people in developing countries. About 60% of the populations of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries depend directly or indirectly on agricultural production for their livelihood (Kohler-Rollefson, 2004).

There is a strong argument that the increasing levels of rural poverty, unemployment and many other development problems witnessed in South African could be addressed if the right interventions are made in the rural sector, but especially to attract the youth into agriculture (FANRPAN, 2012).

Brown (2012), who notes that the world population is growing at a fast rate, with rapid rural-urban migration and declining agricultural productivity, believes that the rural youth are the future of the agricultural sector. This author argues further that the participation of the rural youth in agriculture has been greatly undervalued and that the focus on both rural agriculture and the youth may increase not only employment and the economy of the country, but also its economic competitiveness in exports. Brown further points out the need to recognize not only the challenges that hinder the meaningful participation of youth in the agricultural sector, but also the opportunities that the sector offers. For the author, agricultural production in rural areas involves not only improving agricultural production, but also enabling the rural people to use agriculture as a form of well-being and to have a better livelihood through their agricultural practices.

One of the lines of thinking that inspired the present study is the one put forward by Magongo and Motimele (2011). According to them, one way to ensure that the youth embrace agriculture is to be clear about how rural agriculture is conceived. For these authors, formulating policies and designing programmes meant to stimulate youth participation in agriculture could end up as a waste of time and effort if this logical prior step is not followed.

A similar argument is echoed in a document by FANRPAN's (2012:9), which points out that: "[f]or Africa to achieve food security, youths must be regarded as critical agricultural players who need and deserve special attention, support and follow-up" (2012:9). When unskilled young people desert the rural areas – in South Africa or anywhere else on the African continent - it is because such "special attention, support and follow-up" are lacking. In any event, "[may young people] may have witnessed their parents and grandparents spend a lifetime surviving on a tiny income, perhaps as smallholder farmers, never having much to show for their effort" (FANRPAN, 2012:9). For the present researcher, however, it would be interesting to find out in the field (See Chapter 5) the extent to which the assertion by FANRPAN that youth see agriculture as "old-fashioned" and of "low status" holds true empirically.

Butt et al. (2011) argue that the call for youth's involvement in rural agriculture means there is a dire need to organise the youth for development purposes. In fact, these authors are very upbeat about the younger people, describing them as a cohort that is more or less "agriculture-ready" and that should be vigorously and optimistically canvassed for the real take-off of the agricultural sector. For Butt et al., the youth are more accessible and responsive than older people. They can take risk, are mentally active and scientifically and technologically more suave. What is more, they learn quickly, are mentally alert, are open to new ideas, and are quicker and able to adopt. In short, the youth are the future of agriculture. If they seem "unwilling" to get involved at the moment, it can only be because the agricultural sector has not been properly marketed to them.

2.5 Commercial farming

Dinham and Hines (1984) argue that strategies such as commercial farming that have always been used in trying to lift rural populations out of poverty were hopeless. They point out that the rural population of Sub-Saharan Africa will never be able to use farming to emerge out of poverty or act as an engine for broader economic growth in the absence of vibrant, growth-oriented commercial agriculture.

Arguably, this pessimism would find ample resonance in pre-1994 South Africa, but also in the post-apartheid era. Homeland agriculture (that is, agriculture in the erstwhile “blacks-only” territories) has historically been severely constrained by colonial and apartheid policies. Historically, interventions aimed at ‘modernizing’ farm equipment and practices and on introducing new breeds of crops and livestock have failed to their targets. De Wet (1990), argues that a “top down” approach to development intervention and “insensitivity to local realities” were to blame for this. The argument here is that these interventions often undermine rather than improve smallholder farming. For example, the production of maize, South Africa’s staple crop, was targeted for mechanisation through a top-down approach. Both interventions virtually failed. To-date, agricultural mechanisation in the former “homelands” remain virtually non-existent, and yet agriculture is something of a safety net in many households in these areas (Fay, 2003). Agencies such as South African Youth Chamber of Commerce, the Land Bank, and Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), as well as initiatives such as Youth in Agriculture and Rural Development (YARD), have actively promoted the development of agribusiness for the youth post-1994. However, in the former homelands, the impact of these initiatives remains to be seen.

There is an interesting argument that rural agriculture has been a victim of developmentalism, or at least, this is how the youth view it. It is argued that the more there have been attempts to “mechanise” and “commercialise” rural agriculture, the more the youth’s negative view big business tend to be applied to such interventions. Brown (2012) articulates this argument when he states that the youth’s “hostility” towards “big agriculture” is evident in the fact that they see no difference between commercial agriculture and big business, transnational corporations, globalisation, international capital, export crops or large-scale plantations, which are commonly considered to perpetuate the exploitation of local people and resources in their rural environment. Similar sentiments have been expressed by research economists like Morrison (2009) and agricultural practitioners like Butt et al. (2011), who are sceptical about the role of commercial agriculture in lifting the rural populations out of poverty. Morrison (2009) specifically reports on the disproportionate employment rate of young

people, who he says have particularly been adversely affected by the country's inability to create jobs and the dampening consequences of the global financial crisis.

According to Scoones (2009), what has made things worse is that for it to become mechanised and commercialised, the agricultural sector came to be dominated by economists – and their “mono-disciplinary” perspectives - rather than by rural development practitioners. The market fundamentalist view of “efficiency” came to be foisted on rural, subsistence farming families, as this was thought to be what they lacked. With “efficient” and “improved” farming techniques, the orthodoxy goes, rural families would be able to support themselves and, eventually, have a “surplus” to take to the market. Freedom from poverty was only a few wishes away. The market, it must be added, was viewed as that unfailing space where gloom inevitably turns into gloom. Against this background, it becomes understandable when the advocates of the “livelihoods perspective”, and others, push a counterview – the view that policies need to start by acknowledging the reality in which people live and what assets they possess, instead of weaving change around formulaic interventions and instruments and imposing artificial disciplinary divisions around complex realities.

2.6 Agricultural production

Agricultural production in rural development involves not only improving agricultural production on its own, but also enabling rural people to use agriculture as a form of well-being and to have a better livelihood. The main highlight, according to FANRPAN (2012), is that whereas government has managed to register progress in formulating some land and agrarian policies and related programmes such as Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP), the mainstreaming of youth development in the national policies and practices is still a challenge. Where such policies and programmatic efforts exist, as shown previously, there is a lack of focus and dedicated support. These failures, analysts argue, serve to reinforce negative stereotypes associated with agriculture.

Following its sweeping political revolution in the 1992–1994 period, South Africa has been facing the challenge of moving from an economic system that exclusively served

the interests of the white minority, representing one tenth of the population, to a much more inclusive system that could reverse the injustices of the past and close the gap between the various groups comprising society (FANRPAN, 2012). It is within this context that the involvement and participation of youth in rural agriculture of South African Agricultural landscape post-1994 has been studied.

Youth face challenges brought about by limited access to resources, healthcare, education, training, employment and economic opportunities. Many young people remain marginalized, disconnected or excluded from the opportunities that globalization offers. FANRPAN (2012) says that in Africa, 40% of the total unemployed are youth, 70% of whom live in rural areas. Those who are employed have insecure work arrangements, characterized by low productivity and meagre earnings. White (2012) states that among the youth, females and the rural youth particularly face more difficult challenges especially because of early motherhood and lack of educational and job opportunities. Young people often feel their voice does not carry influence in decisions affecting the community. Getting involved at the local level can result in a sense of community pride, ownership, inclusivity and leadership for all involved. Where there are agricultural policies and programmatic efforts to incorporate youth into the sector, there is a lack of focus and dedicated support which does nothing to change the negative stereotypes associated with agriculture.

Juma (2007) points out that though there are diverse rural livelihood opportunities in rural areas, most youths find them unattractive and not appealing to be engaged in. Many regard farming as a 'dirty activity' due to the lack of proper facilities, and most regard it as 'unprofitable' due to the lack of motivation and success of local farmers, especially amongst the black communities. This has resulted in the fact that agriculture is regarded as an employer of last resort by most young people. More efforts need to be made in the area of policy and law reforms in order to provide proper guidance for informed labour market information and the designing and implementation of youth programmes.

Agriculture being the biggest employer of the rural population, its performance is declining due to several factors, which include unfavourable weather conditions, low use of improved agricultural technologies, poor extension and marketing systems etc. This results in a shift of young people from the rural sector to the urban informal sector, which is characterized by low income, poor working conditions and hence unemployment rate increase in urban areas (Juma, 2007).

Young people have a right and a responsibility to become involved in community activities and decision making. Doing so will help them to build an understanding of challenges faced by their rural area, learn how to have their voice heard, discover how to take action, identify the skills they need to enhance and better understand how 'adult structures' work. These lessons will benefit youth and enable them to share in decision-making with non-youth (The Ontario Rural Council, 2007).

We need to stop looking at youth as assets and start looking at them as agents of change, a process which will engage young people to develop competencies which must be carried out with youth, not for youth. Studies have been done around issues of youth participation in rural agriculture, but has the time been taken to find out if the youth really want to be part of rural agriculture even if empowerment and encouragement around this field is put in place? What do the youth want for themselves, what inspires them?

South Africa's National Youth Policy (2009-2014) defines youth as persons from 15-34 years old. The policy is geared towards prioritizing the needs of the youth with respect to education, health and well-being, economic participation and social cohesion. The policy addresses the identified gaps and challenges based on the circumstances faced by the youth. Youth unemployment in South Africa is extremely high: nearly 70% of youth in South Africa are unemployed and the percentage of youth-owned businesses remains low at 33%. There is no doubt that the challenges faced by South Africa are immense and a challenge to national development (Dangor, 2012).

2.7 Lack of youth participation in agriculture

Looker and Naylor (2009) suggest that, despite the rural youth feeling satisfied with their personal and family life in most cases, and despite seeing home and family as important, many rural youth now frame their rurality and their choice to live in their home communities as failures, either in relation to education or to occupation and career. In the absence of systemic solutions to mitigate and address the risks of staying home for rural youth, many young people embody socioeconomic problems as an inability to 'get very far', and often see themselves as having few options.

The lack of youth participation in agriculture is a matter of great concern to those who are serious about the future of agriculture in South Africa. Although there may be many employment opportunities to make agriculture an attractive career, the road for young people to enter practical farming is almost impossible (Dreyer, 2005). One would also think of putting more attention on the education system, the ideas of modernity and urban mobility that are promoted by education in the schools, which may lead many rural youths to leave their home communities, or to be dissatisfied with their opportunities if they opt to stay in the rural areas.

Akpan (2010) believes that increased involvement of youth in agricultural activities will help reduce the problems of the aging farm population and increasing youth unemployment. In Nigeria 2008 the Akwa Ibom state government took the initiative of involving the youth in agriculture. They put in place agricultural loan schemes to try and encourage youth involvement in agriculture. Despite the incentives that were put in place, the involvement of the youth in agricultural activities has steadily declined in recent years, in spite of the high current youth unemployment rate and the abundance of agricultural jobs available (Akpan, 2010). It is therefore necessary to find out what the youth think about rural agriculture and what they think needs to be done to empower youth to take part in this field.

South Africa should take a step back in its policy formulations and realize that they need to listen to the voices of the people and the youth for the policies to be successful and

address issues that are facing the country and its youth today. More attention needs to be paid to encouraging and empowering the youth to move into agriculture and regard agriculture as a business venture and not just as a way of life, whilst government invests in the sector. This study helps realize the challenges that hinder and/or promote meaningful participation of youth in the rural agricultural sector while highlighting the youths' views on opportunities and possible steps that could be taken to improve the situation.

2.8 Conclusion

The foregoing review has been an attempt to trace the loci of thinking and scholarly debates around the broad issue of rural agriculture, youth empowerment, and the importance of focusing policies and programmatic interventions to address related problems. The review highlights the fact while there is no one “best” way to empower the youth through agriculture, a veritable role exists in the agricultural sector for engendering youth empowerment and rural renewal. A key issue that has also been picked up in the literature – one thinking which the present study took seriously throughout the conceptualisation of this study and the fieldwork - is that however good the intentions behind a given intervention, unless the perspectives of the rural youth themselves are carefully studied, understood and incorporated into policy and programme design, such policies and programmes could come to nothing.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter details the methodology utilised in the study and the practical decisions taken in relation to various aspects of data collection and analysis. The study, it must be recalled, focuses on youth perspectives on rural agriculture.

3.2 Research design

The study used both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The target groups were rural youth and other community members, including local political office holders. Key informants were also utilized, to gain an insight into how government responds to local concerns pertain to rural agriculture. It was important to use multiple methods in this study. The researcher deemed it necessary to triangulate methods from the qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches. Thus a mini survey was used in combination with qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups and observation. This has allowed the study to grasp the best of these two methods, the need for objective data and the need for depth on the issue being researched. In line with the research questions, a triangulated approach helped the researcher to address the weaknesses of each the methodologies while leveraging their strengths. Multiple methods also enhanced validity and reliability of the findings. In-depth interviews and FGDs were used as they are more open, focus mostly on meaning and understanding of the participants' own reality, and gives the researcher the opportunity to interact with the participants whose experiences the researcher wants to understand. Interviews, focus groups, observations and mini surveys are put together and analysed to compile the meaning of the data collected (AIU, 2012). The researcher believes that the quality of the data was vastly improved by the triangulated research design.

According to Polit and Hungler (1995), research designs vary with regard to how much structure the researcher imposes on the research situation, and how much flexibility the

design allows once the study is underway. The data was also collected through the researcher's individual observations of the youth. The researcher found it helpful to use both qualitative and quantitative methods in the data collection as the mini survey data seemed to be contradicting the FGD data and in-depth interview data. For example, there was a question that was posed in the mini survey regarding whether the youth will participate in agriculture if given government support. The responses from the mini survey showed that majority of the youth believed that youth would participate in agriculture if given support. But then again when this question was posed in the FGD and in-depth interviews, the researcher found that the youth do not consider taking in agriculture even if provided with support, they wish to work in urban areas and in fields that are non-agricultural. The qualitative research methods allowed for the researcher to receive more reasons from the youth as to why certain things are happening the way they are (see the Findings and Discussion of Findings chapters).

3.2.1 Reliability

Joppe (2000: 1) looks at reliability as a point whereby one can rely on the same results over and over again. An example would be that if you get the same results every time you open your tap for cold water, then the tap is measured as reliable. So reliability is when the researcher can depend on the same results over again with the precise representation of the study population, and the results need to be reproduced under similar methodology as the one used in conducting the first study. This means that for this study to claim reliability the researcher needs to be able to reproduce the same results repeatedly.

Reliability in qualitative research cannot be looked at the same way as it is thought of in quantitative research. The consistency and repeatability that Joppe refers to does not apply in qualitative research. It applies rather that Joppe focused on quantitative research when he defined reliability. So the present study could claim reliability as defined by Joppe only for the quantitative method that was applied in using mini surveys. Reliability in a qualitative study can be looked at in the form of the quality of the study. The word 'quality' rather than 'reliability' seems more suitable for qualitative

studies. Eisner (1991:58) states that a good qualitative study can give the world better understanding of a situation that they rather did not know about or did not understand about the phenomena being studied. Qualitative researchers seek to understand the world from the perspectives of those being researched (Merriam, 1995). When trying to explain the issue of why things happen the way they do, then one might look at reliability as a good quality of a quantitative study. Then in qualitative studies, quality has the purpose of generating understanding (Stenbacka, 2001). The present research study has used both reliability and quality when gathering its data. The researcher made use of a mini survey to ensure reliability for this study and also interviews, but also mainly because the relevant research questions demanded it. FGDs and observations were conducted to bring understanding of why things happen the way they do in the studied community – again, primarily because the relevant research questions demanded them. People’s understanding of the world changes all the time, therefore repetition of a qualitative study will not produce the same results. It is then safe to say a qualitative study should rather be dependable.

3.2.2 Validity

When speaking of validity one is focusing on the truthfulness of a study, and again validity is a concept which is mostly used to check if the study measures that which it claims to measure. In the present study the researcher was seeking to determine the extent to which the assumption of youth’s lack of interest in agriculture is evident in the chosen study area, and their overall perceptions about rural agriculture. With the use of methods such as a mini survey, FDGs, and observations (partly deployed using a camera) the researcher was able to gauge these concerns.

Qualitative research assumes that reality is constructed and ever changing, and that there is no such thing as a single, immutable reality waiting to be observed and measured. There are *interpretations* of reality, rather than immutable *measures* of it.

This research relies heavily on people’s words to illuminate a point, and, as mentioned before, people change their minds and views about the world, which means this study might not be *replicable* in the strict sense of this term.

3.3 Methodology and data collection methods

The table below demonstrates the congruence between the study's main questions and the research methods deployed to collect empirical data to answer them. As stated above, the methods derive from both qualitative and quantitative research approaches.

3.3.1 Qualitative approach

Glazier (1992: 211) states that:

the strength of qualitative data is its rich description; the richness that the researcher is able to capture from the data collection process, and the richness of the data is ensured by the breadth of the context captured with the data.

By seeking the views of rural youth through qualitative in-depth interviews, the study was able to achieve an understanding of rural youth and their social world: it allowed the researcher to understand the meanings that the rural youth give concerning their participation or lack of it in rural agriculture. The researcher sought to understand and explain the youth's situations from their perspectives and also sought the views of other community members for the purpose of this study.

Bryman (2001) points out that qualitative social science research is often concerned with events or patterns, and how they unfold over time. This study was done by seeking to understand the knowledge the youth have of rural agriculture, and to discover what they think their role is or might be in rural agriculture. Therefore the fact that people are continuously constructing, developing and changing their everyday interpretations of their world should be taken into account in any conception of social science research (Babbie and Mouton, 2003).

3.3.2 Quantitative approach

Quantitative research is a method of research which uses statistical techniques involving the use and analysis of numerical data. Such methods use questions such as where, when, who, and how. According to Cohen (1980), these methods are designed to produce statistically reliable data that is able to reveal information such as how many youth are involved in agriculture and how many are not. This method is independent of the researcher and one should obtain similar results no matter who carries out the research, which makes this approach different from a qualitative approach.

It follows also that the researcher quantitative analysis determine proportions of youth involved in agriculture and derive the strength and varied nature of local perceptions about rural agriculture. Statistical measures required in both these concerns could not have been obtained qualitatively. Both these research approaches have their weaknesses. For instance, the quantitative approach tends to remove the event being studied from its real world setting and ignore the effects of human behaviour (AIU, 2012). The study at hand used a mini survey as one of the tools in collecting its data and this was done to collect its quantitative data. This allowed the researcher to notice that the answers given in mini survey are not the same as the answers given in interviews. Elaborations from the statement that were chosen in the mini survey were obtained through the in-depth interviews and FGDs. Questionnaires are frequently thought of as being a tool for quantitative data collection, because of their nature and their ability to pose a number of closed questions which lead to numerical data collection and later on to statistical analysis. This type of approach is particularly suited for testing and proving hypotheses (AIU, 2012; see also Aliaga and Gunderson (2000: 10) – although this study did not test any hypotheses but answered specific research questions.

The researcher decided it was most appropriate to use the two approaches as that would accommodate the need for both objective and subjective data (see the table below).

Table 1: Congruence between research questions and research methods

RESEARCH QUESTION	METHODS AND DATA SOURCES	JUSTIFICATION
1. To what extent is the assumption that youth 'lack interest' in agriculture evident in the study community?	<p>Questionnaire survey: Random sampling was used to select youth to participate in the study. n = 100 respondents</p> <p>FGD: Two focus groups consisting of 10 members each, purposively drawn from the in-school and the out-of-school youth cohorts</p>	<p>A survey made it possible for the researcher to measure youth participation and determine the issue of 'lack of interest' from a cross section of community youth</p> <p>FGD enabled the researcher to obtain detailed and thick data where participants freely expressed their views and understanding on the subject allowing the researcher to probe deeper.</p>

	<p><u>Key informant interview:</u> participants were senior officials of the agriculture department in the Mquma municipality (Butterworth) and rural development (East London), including the teachers at the chosen school and the ward counsellor of the community.</p>	<p>Key informants were those participants who dealt closely with the situation and are more knowledgeable about agricultural matters and government interventions in this sector</p>
<p>2. How does youth involvement, or 'lack of interest' in agriculture, define the future of agriculture in the Centane region?</p>	<p><u>Questionnaire survey:</u> Random sampling was used to select youth to participate in the study. n = 100 respondents</p> <p><u>FGD:</u> Two focus groups consisting of 10 members each, purposively drawn from the in-school and the out-of-school youth cohorts</p> <p><u>Individual in-depth interview:</u> with key informants, and a purposive sample of youth and members of the community including the school teachers.</p> <p><u>Observations:</u> the day-to-day routines of young people in the community, as well as the overall ecology of the area was observed (and in some cases photographed).</p>	<p>A survey made it possible for the researcher to nuance this research question into local perceptions and local 'narratives' about the present and future of rural agriculture so as to gauge these from a cross section of community youth and other members of the community.</p> <p>FGD enabled the researcher to obtain detailed and thick data where participants freely expressed their views and understanding on the subject allowing the researcher to probe deeper.</p> <p>In-depth interviews helped the researcher obtain qualitative data around the subject under investigation</p> <p>Photographs are worth a thousand words!</p>
<p>3. To what extent are relevant rural agricultural policies supportive of youth involvement in rural agriculture?</p>	<p><u>Questionnaire survey:</u> Random sampling was used to select youth to participate in the study. n = 100 respondents</p> <p><u>FGD:</u> Two focus groups consisting of 10 members each, purposively drawn from the in-school and the out-of-school youth cohorts</p>	<p>A survey made it possible for the researcher to gain an overall picture from a cross-section of respondents on the issue under investigation</p> <p>FGD enabled the researcher to obtain detailed and thick data where participants freely expressed their views and understanding on the subject allowing the researcher to probe deeper.</p>

	<p>Individual in-depth interview: with key informants, and a purposive sample of youth and members of the community including the school teachers.</p>	<p>In-depth interviews helped the researcher obtain qualitative data around the subject under investigation</p>
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3.4 Data collection

As already pointed out, the data were collected using a mini survey, FGDs and in-depth interviews. In addition, observations were carried out throughout the data collection process.

3.4.1 Focus groups

Focus groups are generally seen as a way of understanding how people feel or think about a certain issue they might be experiencing. For the study two FGDs were conducted: one for school-going youth and the other for youth out of school. Each of the FGDs had ten participants. The youth-in-school FGDs were conducted in the schools premises and the FGD for youth out of school was carried out in one of the participant’s yard. Krueger and Casey (2000) say that they are a productive way of discovering attitudes on non-sensitive or non-controversial topics. In this study focus groups helped in bringing conversations together; they were able to stimulate the interviewees’ contributions to the group discussion. Through their relatively informal interchanges, focus groups can lead to insights that might not otherwise come to light through the one-on-one in-depth interviews (Denscombe, 2005). Focus groups are more helpful in generating data out of group discussion and interaction (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999).

What the researcher did was allow for the participants to introduce themselves in case they do not know each other’s names. The researcher would then explain why they are there to the participants and why the participants have been asked to participate in this study. What then happened is that the researcher introduced a topic to the group and asked them questions based on the interview schedule; in most cases the participants controlled the direction of the discussion. The discussions were recorded using recording application on a smartphone. Hand-written notes were also taken, to aid recall

and the reliability of findings. The sessions were quite interactive: the participants had a lot to say in the FGD and this made the sessions worthwhile for the researcher. The researcher learnt, and confirmed from the sessions that, indeed, FGDs did shift the balance of power away from the researcher towards the research participants (Wilkinson, 1999).

3.4.2 In-depth Interviews

Interviews make it possible for the researcher to investigate a situation in a way that other forms of data collections might not allow. In-depth interviews were done with key informants and other community members. Semi-structured interviews provide an initial framework for areas for discussion and enable the researcher to explore issues as they arise (Kaplan, 1985). The researcher asked questions that made the participants answers flow and follow each other. In-depth interviews also facilitate an immediate response to a question, allowing both the researcher and the interviewees to explore the meaning of the questions and answers, resolve any uncertainties and provide a friendly emphasis to data collection (Gorman & Clayton, 1997). Interviews are more encouraging and empowering to the participants as they let them tell their stories in their own words and allow them to determine the direction and content of the interview to researcher in gaining more understanding of the role that the youth have in rural agriculture. The researcher was observant from the first day (when she arrived in the study community), and was able to notice that majority of the youth attended school during the day and young men would in the afternoons go for football training. The observations were non-participant. Majority of the households had television sets and a lot of young people seemed to be more indoors after school and the researcher assumed that they must be watching television in the afternoon or reading their books, since there was no sign of them in the fields or gardens. Observation of participants is one of the tools that are deemed important and suitable when the study is collecting data on naturally occurring behaviours of the youth in their own setting (Kawulich, 2005). What the researcher managed to observe as well was that in this community the old people were the ones that seemed more involved in agriculture, even though a number of households were not active in any agricultural activities.

It was also as part of observation that the photographs of uncultivated fields (presented in this volume) were obtained.

3.4.3 Questionnaires

Surveys are frequently used in sociological research, in the form of questionnaires, interviews or telephone polls. They make it possible for a researcher to ask specific questions about a large number of topics. Questionnaires for this study were distributed to a number of youth, and the researcher had to translate for the participants as most of them had trouble reading and understanding English on their own. The researcher had to translate the questions from English to Xhosa so that the participants would understand what was asked of them. The researcher chose to use the questionnaires (mini surveys) as they were more appropriate for collecting a large amount of descriptive data, they are cheap and do not require as much effort in gathering responses as other research techniques. Like any other research instruments, questionnaires also have their weakness. Andersen and Taylor (2009) point out that the limitation that the respondents are given in the questionnaires for their answer choices may frustrate the respondent. Also, questionnaires require that the respondents are able to read the questions and respond to them, of which this was a challenge in this study as the researcher experienced a lot of illiteracy among the studied group. The researcher had to read and translate the questions that were on the questionnaires to the participants and this took much more time than anticipated. This somehow limited the demographic groups to which the questionnaires were distributed. A mini survey with the youth was used in this study which involved relatively small population samples using brief questionnaires that focused on a limited number of variables.

3.5 Sampling

The study used both systematic random and purposive sampling to select its participants. With these techniques the researcher was able to select appropriate participants to answer the research question. For the mini survey, the researcher used systematic random sampling to select the study participants. The youth-in-school sample was drawn from Tyali High School, Centane. The researcher divided the Grade 11 class into four groups, numbering each student (aged 18 years or above) as “No.1”,

“No.2”, “No.3”, or “No.4”, and asking those with the same number to form a small group. Thereafter, only students numbered “2” and “4” were chosen to participate in the study and given the questionnaires to complete. The sample size for this cohort was 50. A total of 100 questionnaires were administered to the two youth cohorts.

For practical reasons, a different method was applied in “systematically” selecting the out-of-school youth in the community. With the help of an assistant who lived in the communities, the researcher was able identify households that had an out-of-school youth, and selected such homes in an alternating order. The out-of-school youth identified in those homes (totalling 50) were surveyed.

For FGD and in-depth interview data the researcher used purposive sampling to select research participants. According to Marshall (1996), this is a more intellectual strategy than the simple demographic stratification of epidemiological studies, although age, gender and social class might be important variables. The participants were chosen not only because they represented the real situations of young people within the communities, the selection cuts across the availability and willingness of the youth and other community members to participate in the study (Ampadu, 2012). Two focus group sessions were used, one session with 10 in-school youth and the other with 10 out-of-school youth. A total of 10 individual in-depth interviews were also conducted with other community members. These respondents are categorised as “older” community members in this study.

The criteria chosen for the study allowed the researcher to focus on people that she thought would be most likely to experience what (other) young people were going through, know about why agriculture appeared not to be embraced by most community youth, or have insights into the research topic.

For key informant data, the community councillor and two representatives from the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform were interviewed (a total of three key informants in all).

These informants were chosen because of their leadership role in the departments and because they deal with the youth empowerment programs.

3.6 Analysis of data

The data was collected using different techniques, the researcher used frequency distribution tables and cross-tabulation to analyse the quantitative data. The qualitative data were analysed interpretively by subjecting respondents' verbatim responses and detailed accounts to close scrutiny so as to understand what the youth and other community members thought about rural agriculture and the role of the youth in it. Themes were created around which the responses were analysed.

Thirdly, because this study utilised a triangulated design, with regard to some of the analytical themes, the researcher endeavoured to show apparent contradictions between the quantitative and qualitative data – contradictions which in some cases, upon closer examination, did not exist.

3.5 Ethics

Whenever research is conducted with human subjects, it is important that certain ethical considerations are borne in mind (Bryman, 2001). One of the key issues is that of informed consent as this can cover other ethical issues such as anonymity and confidentiality. The researcher made it a priority to fully inform the research participants about the purpose of the study and the process that would be used to collect the data. The researcher maintained anonymity and confidentiality throughout the study by not writing the participants name down in the process of interpreting the data after interviews. Burns and Grove (1993) define anonymity as when the researcher themselves cannot link the participants with their individual responses. Above all, the researcher complied fully with the research ethics requirements of the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Fort Hare. The study was covered by the University's an Ethics Clearance Certificate.

The researcher ensured anonymity by not disclosing the participant's name on the questionnaire, interview schedules and research reports and also by not attaching the written consent forms with the questionnaire or interview sheet. When participants are assured confidentiality it means that the information that the researcher is provided with will not be reported in a manner which identifies the participants (Polit & Hungler, 1995). The researcher made this study maintain confidentiality by keeping the collected data confidential and not revealing the participants identities when reporting the study results (Burns & Grove, 1993).

3.6 Summary

In this chapter the researcher presented a detailed account of the research process, strategy and methodology used when conducting the study. The researcher used quantitative methods as they are descriptive and also qualitative methods as they produced exploratory findings. The researcher obtained consent from all participants, and confidentiality were ensured during the administration of the mini surveys and individual interviews together with FGDs. This chapter has described the research methodology that the study used, including the study population, sample, data collection instruments and all approaches used to ensure the ethics, reliability and validity of the study.

CHAPTER 4 CENTANE COMMUNITY - A PORTRAIT

4.1 Introduction

As stated at the outset, the study was conducted in the Eastern Cape, in a community known as Centane. This is one of the communities that make up Mnquma Local Municipality in Amathole District. Located about 25 kilometres south-east of Butterworth, this mostly rural community “links the N2 highway with the coastal resorts along the Indian Ocean” (The Reconciliation Strategy for Mnquma Rural 1 Village, 2010: 1). The driving distance between Butterworth and East London (Eastern Cape’s second major city, after Port Elizabeth) is approximately 111 kilometres. The socio-economic and ethnographic profile presented in this chapter illustrates, among other things, the community’s deplorable socio-economic conditions in the area, despite its asset of vast arable land. It also provides some background to the potential role of rural agriculture and provides some justification for some of government’s agri-focused and rural-targeted policies in recent years.

It is appropriate at this juncture to point out that the study area is in the former Transkei, one of the two “homeland republics” (the second being Ciskei) created by the apartheid regime but which became merged with the erstwhile “whites-only” territories in the region to form the Eastern Cape Province. The Province’s current relatively underdeveloped status is generally attributed to the fact that the two “homelands” – not unlike the other former “homelands” elsewhere in the country – were severely marginalised in the apartheid scheme of things. The cumulative effects of colonial and apartheid marginalisation and development and governance failures in the post-apartheid era have created enormous development challenges for the South African government. One could argue that the Eastern Cape is, partly on account of its history, a real frontier for brave new experiments in development interventionism – as the profile of Centane community presented in this chapter illustrates.

4.2 Social and ethnographic profile

Centane community is comprised of several small villages which have similar physical, socio-economic and ethnographic characteristics. The fieldwork for this study was conducted in one of these villages, known as Feni. Bell & Newby (1972) state that researchers tend to produce a sympathetic portrait of the community they are studying due to lack of objectivity. The present research took every possible step to avoid this pitfall. In any event, as this study is covered by the University of Fort Hare's codes on social research ethics, it was crucial that objectivity be the watchword for the fieldwork.



Figure 1: Map of the Eastern Cape



A visitor to Centane community would be struck by the abject lack of basic services, although many rural villages in South Africa have a similar lack. This is in stark contrast to the gleaming cities, whose infrastructural superiority has often made South Africa to be partly classified as a “First World” country. Centane reveals South Africa’s “Third World” face. It is an epitome of the deep rural region of the former Transkei, which continues to face huge developmental challenges, falling as it does, on the periphery of government’s otherwise large investment in infrastructure and basic services (see Monde, 2002).

A key sociological feature is the extended family. In most households, grandparents raise grandchildren. In several of the households, children’s mothers live in the same house, while in many other households, the mothers have migrated to the urban centres

in search of employment opportunities. Foster-parenting is a dominant feature of family life in the community. Krige (1936) points out that when looking at families today one finds that most parents have lost control over their children, with more and more children being born outside formal marriages. However, the extended family system has long been considered a crucial feature of African family system. According to Siqwana-Ndulo (1998) African families are not about a mother, father and children: the family is a much broader circle of people. Indeed, as this researcher observed, community members in Centane – and the Eastern Cape in general – tend to consider people as family when they share the same clan name. It was almost a “right” for someone with the same clan name to move in and live with another who shares the same clan name – provided there is no direct refusal on the part of the prospective host “family”. The households in the community were thus found to be made up of not just people immediate links of kinship, but of people with extended ties, such as those denoted by sameness of clan names.

Another important sociological feature of the community was the large numbers of old people. The majority of the population was the older generation. It is as though the villages were abandoned by young people.

4.3 Local economy and livelihoods

The overall economic and livelihoods picture that one encounters in the community is that of vulnerability. From the survey, interview and empirical data obtained by this researcher, people’s livelihoods appeared to be affected by such things as lack of access to resources and information. Besides, there seemed to be widespread awareness about both the similarities in the livelihoods status of community members and the differential potential of community members to access the information with which to build their livelihoods and forge ahead economically. Overall, the researcher came away with the impression that there were differences in terms of access to resources, and that these differences in turn potentially influenced how people coped with the challenging economic circumstances in the area. According to Chileshe (2005: 32-33) Local views are important for developing a deeper insight into livelihoods

portfolios, vulnerability and well-being. In other words, designing policies to tackle livelihoods challenges in local communities cannot be left to “outsiders” alone. In Centane, the researcher observed that livelihoods appeared to revolve around the number of livestock a household owned; which meant – for the researcher at least – that households with more livestock were less vulnerable to poverty.

Centane had all the hallmarks of a community whose members had stopped or taken a break from crop farming. A number of crop fields lay abandoned and most of them were turning into forests. Shackleton et al. (2013) states that the deplorable livelihood situation in many rural villages cannot be separated from the fact that there is decreasing participation in rural agriculture. They further point out that agriculture used to dominate the occupational portfolios of most rural households, with which they were able to meet their food needs. Even livestock ownership has decreased, Shackleton et al. (2013) argue, and this has had an effect on cropping, as there is now a dearth of draught power. There is no doubt, therefore, that household incomes have been adversely affected, and that dependency on urban-based family members has increased.

The present researcher found during the fieldwork that, indeed, most families were dependent on their family members who were employed in the urban areas, and on welfare grant transfers (see Chapters 5 and 6). The researcher found virtually no other form of economic activities that people were involved in, and observed that to meet everyday grocery needs, people had to go to town.

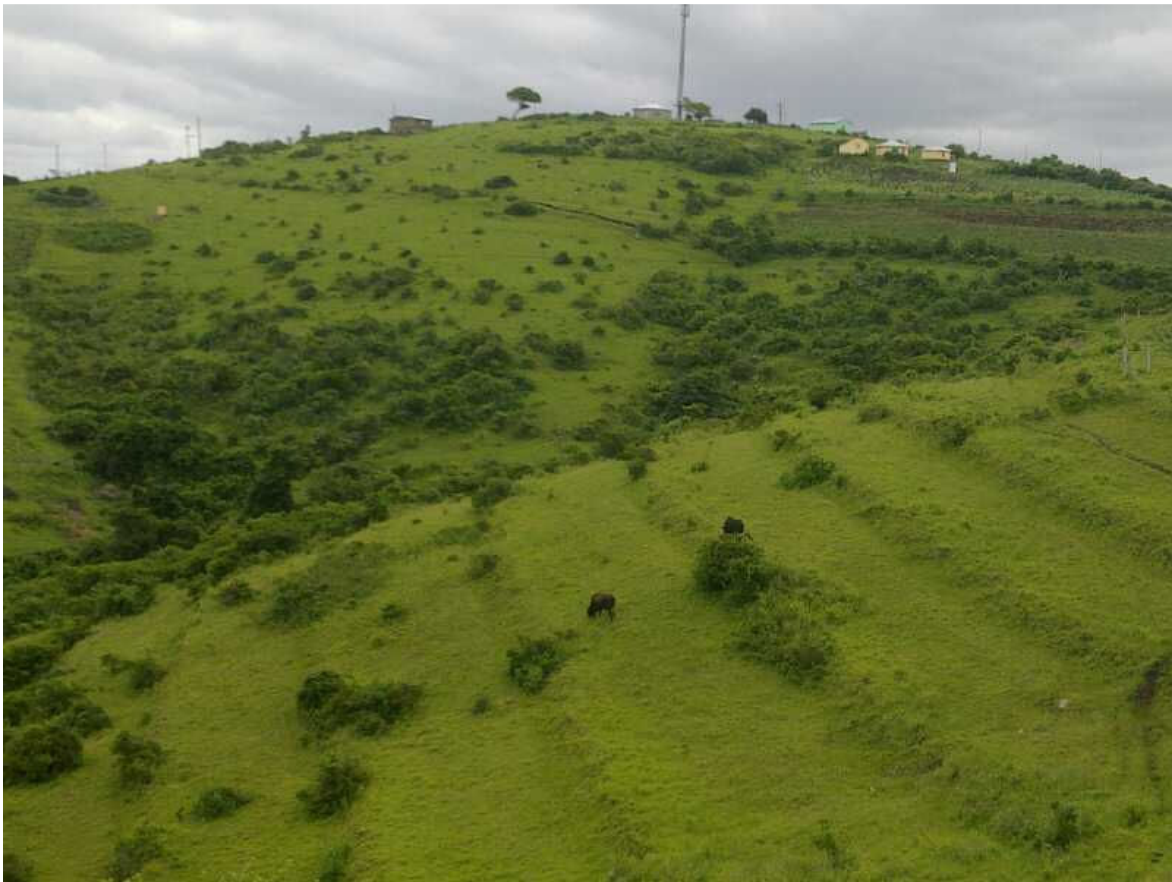


Plate 1: Agriculture abandoned

4.4 Community resources

A first-time visitor to Centane would immediately form the impression that this is an underdeveloped community. This is equally how this researcher felt when she first arrived for the fieldwork. The study community lacks resources such as infrastructure, industries, developed agriculture, and government institutions. Evidence of poverty can be seen everywhere. Women and young people could be seen fetching firewood and water for domestic use as part of their home duties. There were no proper shops, and the houses that would be pointed out as shops by the villagers only sold beer, soda, and cigarettes.

However, the community appears to be rich in resources such as land. While this can be converted into a potent development asset, this appears not to have been done. Instead, there is a high dependency on social grants.

One resource whose lack has serious public health implications for the community is water for drinking and household use. People draw drinking water from open dams, springs, and water tanks for their drinking water (Plates 2 and 3). When the researcher sought to know why a community in today's South Africa could be left to depend on unsafe water sources, the explanation obtained from municipal officials was that underground water pipes had been laid across the community since 2010 by the Amathole District Municipality, but that the actual supply of water was the responsibility of the Water Services Authority (WSA). Obviously, the community was still waiting for water provisioning.



Plate 2: Source of water for household use (1)



Plate 3: Source of water for household use (2)

The researcher learnt that rain water harvesting was also an entrenched practice in the study community – but this was mainly practiced by people living in houses with zinc roofs. The storage of rain water in tanks was also a “privilege” enjoyed by people with living in “proper” houses. Mainly as a result of the water challenges, sanitation was a major issue in the villages (see Momba et al. 2006).

With regard to electrical power, Centane was connected to the national grid in 2008. However, like in most rural villages in South Africa, the electricity supply is erratic and with very low voltage. Only a handful of houses were without electricity; these houses had never been connected. Some of these houses were located about two kilometres away from Feni, the area where the data were collected. People in the area depended on gasoline lamps and candles for light and primer stoves or wood for cooking.

However, in this section of Centane community, there was a small community enterprise formed around one resource that was abundant in the area: sand. This section of the community is located near the Kei River; hence many people here were fishers. When the researcher asked if they were fishing legally, the response was that they did not think they needed any permission to fish there, as they had been fishing in the Kei River since their childhood – an occupation they learnt from their parents. However, the fishing practiced in the area is for subsistence, not for profit-making activity.

A major characteristic of the community was inferior infrastructure. The villages were connected to one another by gravel roads, while footpaths linked the various homesteads to one another. These served both humans and livestock. In the Feni area where the data were collected, there was no health facility. The available health clinic was located approximately eight kilometres from the village. The “nearest” hospital to community members in the Feni area (in terms of relative travel “convenience” rather than physical distance) was Butterworth Hospital, located 38.6 kilometres away, and not the Centane hospital – located 34.3 kilometres away. Butterworth was more “accessible” and “convenient” to use than the local clinic and Centane hospital because community members could access it by bus or taxi – and primarily because the road linking this area of Centane community to Butterworth is tarred.



Plate 4: Livestock ownership dwindling?

As shown in Plate 6, majority of the houses in Centane are made of mud. Inter-village commuting is on foot (especially between nearby villages) and by taxi – although this is the less patronised option. Village-town commuting is mainly done by taxi (vans and Toyota *Avanza*), although in reality, there is much trekking, as the taxi and bus services do not conveniently connect the different villages. The researcher learnt that there was a distance of up to four kilometres between a bus or taxi stop to some of the villages. The available bus service transports people from Qolora Mouth to town. While the connection intervals are longer for the bus service, people prefer it to taxis, as it is cheaper.



Plate 5: Typical homesteads and house types

While there are primary schools serving clusters of villages, attending high school was a different thing. Young people from a village like Feni must travel several kilometres to reach Tyali Senior Secondary School, the only high school in the area. The schools appeared very poorly resourced, with broken windows, unsecured yards,

The researcher learnt that there was a “crime problem” in the community. However, in the Feni area, there was no police station nearby. The nearest police station was in Centane Town, located about nine kilometres away. Similarly, there were no government departments nearby, and no libraries. There was only one recognised church with a building.

4.5 Conclusion

Centane is not unlike other rural communities in the Eastern Cape. They form the huge latticework of communities which yearn for development, but which, in many cases, have untapped resources that could be harnessed to improve local socio-economic conditions. The foregoing portrait serves as a backdrop against which to understand the clamour among the youth for government “support” to improve rural livelihoods and reverse the spiral of poverty.

CHAPTER 5 RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

As stated at the outset, the central aim of this study is to understand the state of rural agriculture through the eyes of the youth. The study targeted only young people between the ages of 18 and 35. The specific focus is on: (a) the present levels of youth participation in rural agriculture; (b) narratives and perceptions of the youth and other community members about the place of the youth in rural agriculture, and (c) levels of government support towards youth participation in rural agriculture. These three focus areas are empirically captured in the three research questions elucidated in Chapter One, namely:

- i. To what extent is the assumption that youth 'lack interest' in agriculture evident in the study community?
- ii. In the narratives of the youth and other community members, how does youth involvement, or 'lack of interest' in agriculture, define the future of rural agriculture in the Centane region?
- iii. To what extent are relevant rural agricultural policies supportive of youth involvement in rural agriculture?

Following this introductory remarks, the three research themes are analysed and presented in line with the research questions. The quantitative (survey) and qualitative (FGD, interview and observational) data are utilised complementarily, such that the reader is able to discern where information obtained during, say an FGD session, is corroborated or contradicted by mini-survey data. The main research findings are presented in the form of themes and subthemes where necessary. The study uses verbatim quotes drawn from the interview and FGD sessions. Tables, figures and photographs are used to give an appropriate visual effect to the presentation.

5.2 Respondent characteristics

The study focused on both in-school out-of-school youth. An FGD session was devoted to each of these two categories. The gender composition and total number of participants per FGD are provided in Table 2.

Table 2: FGD participants

GENDER	IN-SCHOOL YOUTH	OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH
MALE	5	3
FEMALE	5	7
TOTAL	10	10

The sample size of in-depth interview respondents (youth) was 10 (five male; five female). Additionally, interviews were conducted with 10 non-youth community members (five male; five female). The ages of the community members ranged from 40 to 70 years – Table 3.

Table 3: In-depth interviewees

GENDER	YOUTH	OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS
MALE	5	5
FEMALE	5	5
TOTAL	10	10

The sample size for the mini-survey was 100 (this was also the number of valid, completed questionnaires received from respondents). The number of questionnaire received from each category of youth (in-school and out-of-school) was 50. The gender distribution of respondents in the in-school youth category was 25 (male) and 25 (female); the distribution for the out-of-school youth category was 22 (male) and 28 (female) – Table 4.

Table 4: Mini-survey respondents

GENDER	IN-SCHOOL YOUTH	OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH
MALE	25	22
FEMALE	25	28
TOTAL	50	50

n=100

The gender composition of the survey sample is depicted in Figure 2.

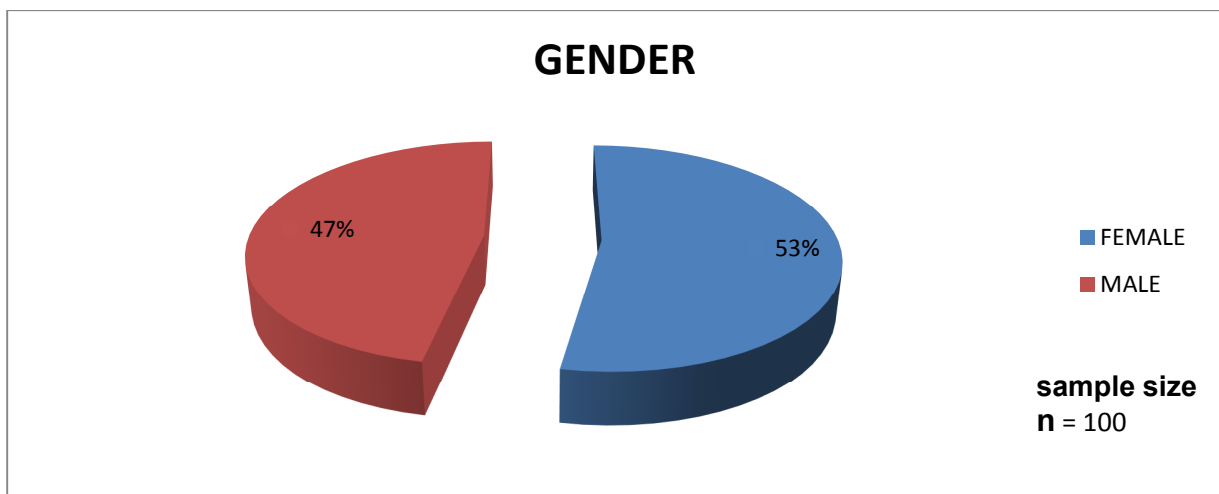


Figure 2: Gender composition of survey sample

The 50 survey respondents in the out-of-school youth category were asked to specify their highest educational attainments. An analysis of this variable showed that two had a tertiary education, 18 had Grade 12, while 30 had attained high school or lower grades – in other words, did not complete high school. These results are depicted in Figure 3. There was no record of tertiary graduates or post graduates in the youth survey sample. It should be stated here that only the out-of-school youth respondents were asked to answer the survey question pertaining to employment status (as well as highest educational attainment).

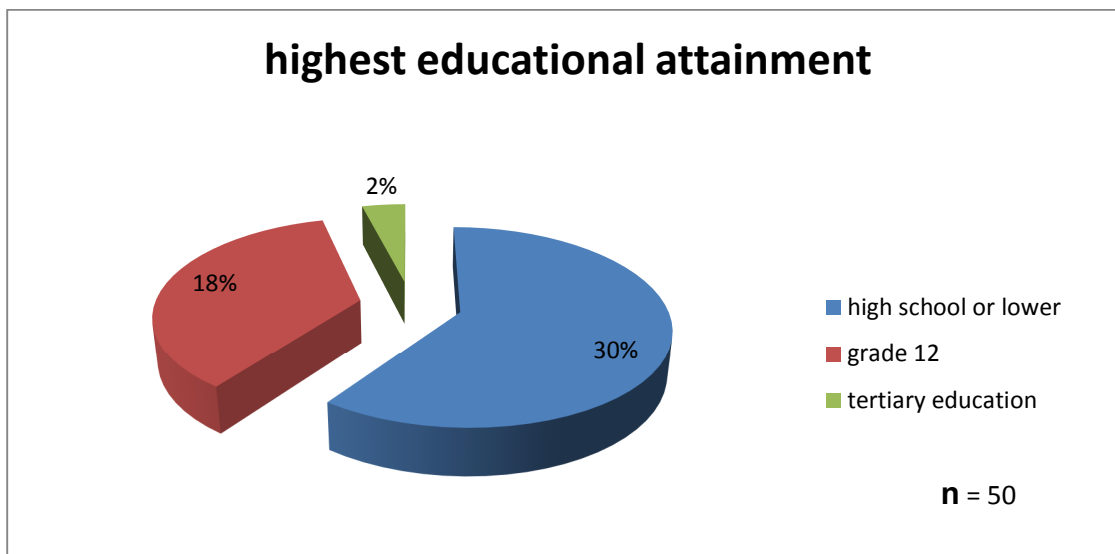


Figure 3: Educational attainments of youth-out-of-school survey sub-sample

The employment status of the out-of-school youth survey respondents is depicted in Figure 4, while Table 5 summarises the relevant characteristics (gender, age, educational levels, and current agricultural status) of non-youth community members interviewed for the study.

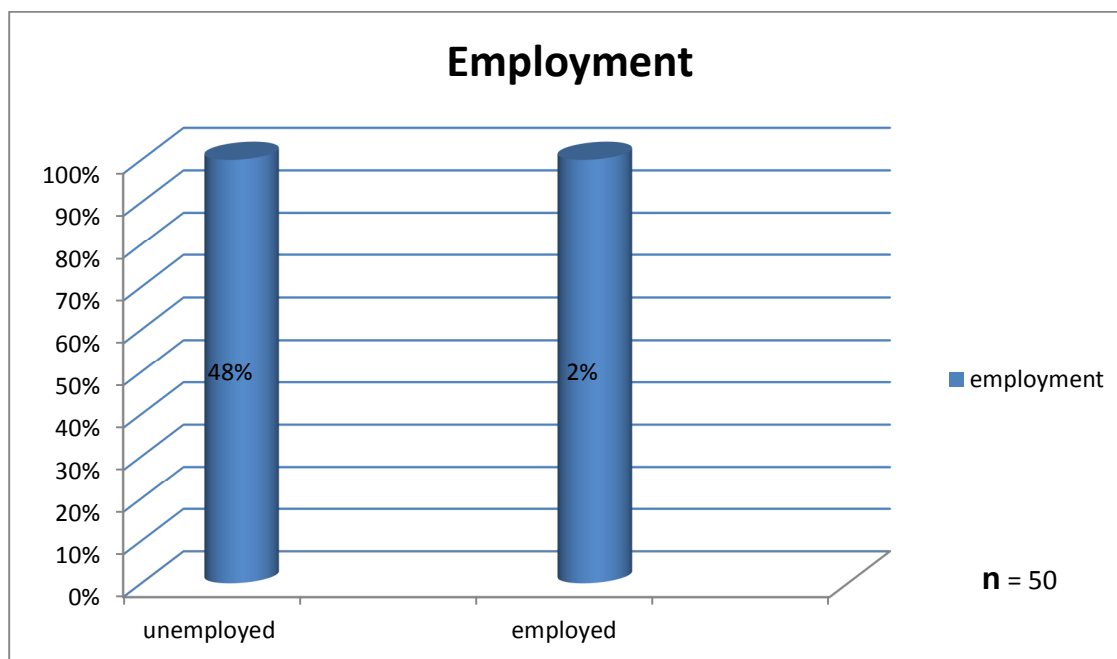


Figure 4: Employment status of youth-out-of-school survey respondents

Table 5: Characteristics of interview respondents: Other community members

	Choice	N	Valid (%)	Acummu.
GENDER	Male	5	50	50
	Female	5	50	100
	Total	10	100	
AGE	Below 40	2	20	20
	40-49	2	20	40
	50-59	3	30	70
	60-69	2	20	90
	70-79	1	10	100
	80 above	0	0	100
	Total	10	100	
EDUCATION	High school or lower	8	80	80
	grade 12	2	20	100
	Tertiary	0	0	100
	Graduate	0	0	100
	Total	10	100	
Current agricultural	Currently active	4	40	40

involvement	Currently inactive	6	60	100
	Total	10	100	

5.3 Present levels of youth participation in rural agriculture

As stated earlier, the first research question sought to gauge present levels of rural youth participation in agriculture. An analysis of the mini survey data showed that a majority (65%) of the youth (in school and out of school) were not currently involved in any agricultural activities (see Table 6). The main agricultural activities of those that were involved (35%) were maize and vegetable production. Only three youth respondents were into livestock farming.

Table 6: youth agricultural involvement

	Choice	N	Valid (%)	Accumu.
Current agricultural involvement	Active in agriculture	35	35	35
	Inactive in agriculture	65	65	100
	Total	100	100	

It is in the FGD sessions that the researcher gained a deeper understanding as to why most rural youth (65% of respondents) were not taking part in any agricultural activities. According to the FGD participants, there were two main reasons: lack of finance and lack of support and motivation from parents. According to one out-of-school youth FGD participant:

I believe that for the youth to be involved in farming, the parents have to support the youth and encourage them to take part in farming. They must be able to show us the benefits of taking part in farming as well. Majority of the youth are seating at home and not doing anything because of lack of motivation from parents and other community members (Out-of-school youth FGD respondent, 30/09/2013).

On the other hand, two participants in the in-school youth FGD pointed out that school-going youth were taking part in agricultural activities, planting vegetables such as cabbage, potatoes, and carrots and also doing maize farming. They added that other community members were involved in livestock farming (cattle- and goat-rearing).

However, these participants further pointed out that school-going youth who were farming did not own the gardens or vegetables - or the livestock they cared for: these belonged to their parents. In other words, their involvement in agriculture was a form of assistance they rendered to their parents. Among this category of youth respondents, there was a high level of awareness that youth involvement in rural agriculture was minimal – an issue they too blamed on lack of parental support, and the fact that farming was widely viewed as not providing a route to the “good life”. One of the in-school youth FGD participants argued:

One of the reasons why we as youth are not involved in agricultural activities is because there is not much to gain from all the hard work people put in when it comes to farming. We see people farm every year and eat what they get from the gardens and see no profit from all this hard work. Our parents don't tell us about what or how much they make from all this hard work which makes it hard for the youth to be really interested in farming. Even the livestock owners are not showing any wealth or growth from their livestock ownership. Maybe, just maybe, if we could be taught and made aware of the benefits that farming holds, then we might start getting involved in agriculture (in-school youth FGD participant, 01/10/2013).

These responses underlined a belief among the youth respondents that parental encouragement and motivation - and a clear return in terms of material benefits - were important, if agriculture was to thrive in their rural community.

When the question about current levels of youth involvement in rural agriculture was posed to key informants (interviewees from the District Department of Agriculture, Butterworth, and Provincial Department of Rural Development, East London), the response obtained was that there was a fundamental lack of interest among the youth in rural agriculture. According to the key informants, the youths were preoccupied with their education; but even those that were not studying were primarily concerned about securing wage employment in the urban areas. This view was echoed by one non-youth community member (a high-school teacher) interviewed for this study:

The youth are very laid back when it comes to agriculture, they don't want to be part of it, they leave it to their parents. All they want is to enjoy the benefits without working for them. I believe that they lack involvement because of the

belief that they will get better jobs in urban areas (community member, 03/10/2013).

Table 7 summarises the survey responses to the Likert-scale statement about farm ownership among youths in the study community.

Table 7: Likert scale responses about farm ownership by the youth

Statement	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Most youth in this community own farms.	6%	5%	7%	50%	32%

n=100

The researcher was unable to confirm through observations if there were youth-owned farms in the community; there were no immediate indications that such farms existed. Besides, it appeared that most community members had abandoned – or taken a break from - agricultural activities possibly due to the drought experienced in the study area in recent years.

However, during the FGD sessions, one in-school youth participant pointed out that there was a group of youth in the community who ploughed and planted vegetables on a small farm owned by one of their members. They mostly sold the vegetables harvested from the farm. Other than that, this FGD participant did not know of a farm owned by a youth. The researcher later had the opportunity of interviewing a youth respondent who said he owned a farm:

I own a farm, I am involved in crop production and I do receive assistance from the [District] Department of Agriculture even though it is not that much. There are not many young people that own farms; I actually know just two other of which I have met in a meeting with the Department of Agriculture. Young people need to be informed of such opportunities and when I try telling them about it they seem uninterested (youth farmer, 22/10/2013).

The District Department of Agriculture did not have reliable data on youth-farm ownership either. According to one of the key informants interviewed for this study:

There are not many young people that own farms. From this Department I could say that there are only about five young people that we are assisting that own farm land and producing in these farms (key informant, District Department of Agriculture, 22/10/2013).



Plate 6: Cabbage garden



Plate 7: Plate 2: Spinach and maize garden



Plate 8: Livestock - Goats

5.4 Local perspectives about the place of the youth in rural agriculture

This theme was derived from the second research question (“In the narratives of the youth and other community members, how does youth involvement or ‘lack of interest’ in agriculture, define rural agriculture in the Centane?”). The findings pertaining to this research question are presented under two subthemes: (a) narratives about ‘lack of interest’ in agriculture, (b) perceptions about the role and future of agriculture in the community. The empirical data are drawn from key informant interviews, FGDs, and the community survey.

5.4.1 Narratives about 'lack of interest' in agriculture

From the survey responses, the researcher gained an overall impression that the youth in the community did not have much interest in agriculture – with 62% of survey respondents referring to it as 'hard labour' and only 30% disagreeing with this view.

Interestingly, contrary to allusions made earlier about 'lack of involvement in agriculture' being a result of lack of parental support and motivation, responses to the Likert-scale statement about a possible explanation for the lack of interest, besides this occupation being 'hard labour', appeared self-indicting. A majority of respondents (63%) blamed lack of involvement on 'laziness' (see Table 8).

Table 8: Likert scale responses about lack of interest in agriculture

STATEMENT	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Youth lacking interest in agriculture because they are lazy.	24%	39%	7%	18%	10%

n=100

As shown presently, despite the widespread perception of 'laziness' as an explanation among the survey sample, this variable did not appear to dominate the explanations given by participants in the focus group discussions with the youth, but appeared to be a key issue among the key informants, that is, the government officials. Some of the main narratives picked up during the FGDs with the youth pertained to lack of information and other resources as well as what one might term the 'urban pull'. The following responses provide attest to these narratives:

The youth are not showing interest in agriculture not because we don't want to but I think it is because we lack information and resources to get going in farming (out-of-school youth FGD participant, 30/09/2013).

I think we as youth have this wish to go work in urban areas and therefore overlook the agricultural sector as a place that we could work in. That's what I think personally (out-of-school youth FGD participant, 30/09/2013).

Young people are too lazy to make farming a full time job. Yes they need assistance and motivation but they must first show interest in agriculture before they could get any assistance. For example, there must be a project that they have started on their own, something they are doing for themselves, before one could the youth are not lazy. Otherwise, I believe that laziness is what's making the youth run away from agriculture (in-school youth FGD participant, 01/10/2013).

I don't know if we should really say that we are lazy, but I do think we are lacking motivation and encouragement from the people that do take farming seriously. The Department of Agriculture should be playing its part in trying to make us understand the field of agriculture; it's like we are not given that much to choose from when looking at agriculture. We need options, we need to be informed and therefore choose for ourselves if we want to take part in agriculture. The way things are now it is as though the Department of Agriculture and our parents have decided that we don't want to be farmers (in-school youth FGD participant, 01/10/2013).

An interview with a key informant at the District Department of Rural Development and Land Reform zeroed in on the 'laziness' narrative:

The youth are lazy and they do not want to pursue things on their own, it's like they want to be spoon-fed all the time. Instead of them doing things for themselves, they expect government to hand them things that are of benefit to them. They want to sit at home and do nothing rather than start a small garden project for themselves (key informant, Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, 23/10/2013)

Another narrative pertained to the nature of agriculture itself, although there was no consensus as to what aspects of agriculture discouraged the youth from taking an interest in it. For instance, as shown in Table 9, there were mixed responses as to whether agriculture was a 'time-consuming' activity (there was 41% agreement, 31 percent disagreement, and a large percentage of 'not sure' response – 28% - to a Likert-scale statement about this aspect).

Table 9: Likert scale responses about agricultural activities as time-consuming

STATEMENT	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Agricultural activities are time consuming	6%	35%	28%	28%	3%

n=100

Previous studies, such as FAO and IFAD (2012), speak about hunger and malnutrition being on the rise because rural people see agriculture as a waste of time. Relatedly, Looker and Naylor’s (2009) assert that agriculture would consume a lot of time when done manually by hands, as is the case in many rural communities in Africa. These studies do find support in some of the qualitative data obtained during the FGD sessions: some of the youth participants expressed the view that agricultural activities were time consuming and too much work. However, the researcher’s analysis of her mini-survey data (Table 9), which gauged the view of a cross-section of the community’s youth, showed that youth opinions were divided on this issue. Only a slight majority (41%) of respondents agreed that agriculture was ‘time-consuming’; 31% disagreed with the Likert-scale statement. A large percentage (28%) was “not sure”. Similarly, responses from many of the other community members interviewed for the study did not reveal a consensus about whether farming was viewed by local people as drudgery:

Like any other job I think agriculture needs dedication and off course some time to invest in it. I would not therefore say that agricultural activities are time consuming (community member, 03/10/2013).

There is no such thing as agriculture being time consuming; you don’t spend time in the garden all day every day. When you do get into the garden it does not mean you spend all your time and energy there. Also looking at livestock is not something that I would consider difficult to do, it is not true that agriculture is time consuming (community member, 03/10/2013).

One community member, who was also school teacher, expressed the view that:

agriculture demands a lot of energy and time from people; I think it's one of the hardest jobs that one could possibly take on every day (community member, 01/10/2013).

To the Likert-scale statement portraying agriculture as an ‘appealing field to work in’, a majority of youth respondents (58%) expressed strong agreement – with the ratio of responses signifying overall agreement standing at 65% (Table 10). This response pattern was mirrored in another Likert-scale statement that portrayed farming as a ‘dirty activity’- a statement that elicited disagreement from 52% of youth respondents and agreement from 28%, with 21% being ‘unsure’ (Table 11). These findings were somewhat paradoxical: the researcher did not expect to hear a view of agriculture as ‘appealing’ (or not a ‘dirty’ activity) from people who did not seem to take an interest in farming. Besides, the respondents’ views failed to echo the findings of some previous studies, such as that of Leavy and Smith (2010) in which youth in Tanzania saw agriculture as a dirty activity that they were not willing to be part of. Juma (2007) also points out that youth see agriculture as unattractive and unappealing activity to be engaged in.

Table 10: Likert scale responses - Agriculture as an appealing field

STATEMENT	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Agriculture is an appealing field to work in	7%	58%	15%	17%	3%

n=100

Table 11: Likert scale responses: Agriculture as a dirty activity

STATEMENT	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Agriculture is a dirty activity	9%	19%	21%	37%	15%

n=100

5.4.2 Perceptions about the role and future of agriculture

It was difficult to paint a consistent quantitative picture of the overall perceptions of the youth with regard to the role and future of agriculture in Centane community other than that a majority of the youth respondents (78%) agreed that the youth were turning their backs on agriculture (Table 12), and that without adequate support and motivational resources, the future of agriculture in the community was bleak (see subsequent tables). The researcher observed during the fieldwork that the youth spent much of their time playing soccer in the local football field and practicing for their community football team at the same time when their parents and younger siblings seemed to be tending the livestock (see Plate 6).

Table 12: Likert scale responses about youth and agricultural activities

STATEMENT	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Youth is turning away from agricultural activities	58%	20%	8%	11%	3%

n=100



Plate 9: Local youth being active in other activities

A closer interaction with the respondents during FGD sessions yielded the following instructive remarks from the participants:

The youth want money, they want to do work that will provide them with a salary at the end of the month. Therefore they chose to move to urban areas for better jobs that will guarantee finances at the end of the month. Unless someone comes with a better way to bring youth into the agricultural field, the youth will keep distancing themselves from agriculture (out-of-school youth FGD participant, 30/09/2013).

Yes the youth are turning away from agriculture, this is because of the hard work and less pay the agricultural field offers. Young people are looking for better opportunities for themselves and want to be better than their parents in the long run. This is why we see most of the youth moving to urban areas to look for job opportunities (in-school youth FGD participant, 01/10/2013).

These sentiments were echoed by key informants (interviewees from selected government departments) and by other community members:

I have a case here of a young man that was doing well in his own garden project and the department was supporting him with resources. Just last month I called him to check how his vegetables were coming up and he told me that he had left the province; he is in Gauteng now to look for a job. I was shocked because he has been doing this for three years now and was doing okay. Now he wants to have a paying job and not worry about his produce not making him enough money or any money at all. The youth are being drawn by other youth in urban areas, they want to be like them and drive nice cars and have beautiful houses and it's hard for them to see that when they are in the agricultural field and this is because they have been growing up with parents that have been farmers for years and have nothing to show for their hard work still (key informant, District Department of Agriculture, 22/10/2013).

The youth turn away from agriculture because the government departments are not trying hard to bring them into the field of agriculture. I believe if more time and finances were given to the youth for the purpose of agriculture, this situation of youth moving away from agriculture would change. This all needs time and dedication from our government and its departments in large (key informant, Department of Rural Development, 24/10/2013).

Our youth have been hands off when it comes to agricultural activities even though once the food is ready to eat; they are the first ones on the line! They are lazy and that will not take them anywhere (community member, 03/10/2013).

As shown in the tables below, however, responses to a number of Likert-scale statements with which the researcher sought to quantitatively gauge local perceptions about the role and future of agriculture in Centane community appear to be mutually inconsistent – at least on first reading (but see Discussion of Findings in the next chapter). For instance, while a majority (48%) of youth respondents believed that agriculture was dying in the study community, a large proportion of respondents (32%) believed otherwise. An equally large number (20%) were unsure – Table 13. Even so, when respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the statement that agriculture was for ‘old people’, an overwhelming majority (67%) disagreed with the statement, while only 29% agreed, with just 4% being unsure – Table 14.

Table 13: Likert scale responses about death of agriculture

STATEMENT	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Agriculture is dying in this community	9%	39%	20%	24%	8%

n=100

The same statement was rephrased and posed as a question for the individual interviews held with some of the youths as well as with community members and government officials. One youth responded as follows:

Yes in my community agriculture is dying, people are abandoning even small scale farming now. People are choosing to buy from the shops all of those things they used to plant for themselves (youth interviewee, 30/09/2013).

The following remarks were obtained from two community members:

I have been farming for as long as I can remember. I grew up in this community and there was so much agricultural activity taking place. People owned big fields for planting vegetables and maize and they also owned their own gardens, which they planted as well. So many people had donkeys, cattle, sheep and goats in their kraals. But when you look at the very same community today it's really not hard to see that agriculture is dying, slowly but it is dying. Only a few people still own such livestock, but there is only one household that still owns sheep. People's sheep died in the late '90s because of drought and too much heat; there is almost no one who still plants their fields. This is all because of the unpredictable weather (community member, 02/10/2013).

I have not been taking part in garden farming for almost three years now; but it's only because of the drought that we have been experiencing. Before I stopped farming I lost so much money on it. We spend money when we plant our gardens and it's a loss when nothing shows at the end of the season. What I do now is I focus on my cattle and goats and put most of my time on them; I have lost some of them in the past years due to drought as well but the little that I do have left means a lot to me (community member, 02/10/2013).

According to the survey results, the youth respondents did not quite believe that agriculture was an occupation for ‘old people’. An overwhelming majority of respondents (67%) disagreed with such a suggestion, while only 29% agreed – Table 14. This finding, again, differs from that of previous studies, reviewed in Chapter 2 of this work, that suggest that agriculture is viewed by the youth as an occupation for old people (see FANRPAN, 2012; Future of Agriculture Brief, 2010).

Table 14: Likert scale responses about agriculture being for old people

STATEMENT	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Agriculture is for old people	28%	1%	4%	48%	19%

n=100

The apparent contradiction between non-involvement of youth in agriculture, and a view by a vast majority of youth (survey) respondents that agriculture was not an occupation for the old, appears to have been resolved during the youth FGD sessions. According to some of the participants:

Agriculture is not for old people only, the youth can do it if they want to do it. In other communities there are young people that take pride in agriculture; so it is not right to say it is for old people (out-of-school youth FGD participant, 30/09/2013).

Most of the people that are taking part in agriculture are the older generation, not to say that younger people are totally not fond of agriculture. Old people grew up in different times when agriculture mattered more to them and their parents, we are living in different times now and most of the youth are not interested in agriculture today, we think there is better opportunities in urban areas and outside the agriculture sector (in-school youth FGD participant, 01/10/2013).

Or, perhaps, the contradiction remained unresolved, at least according to community members at large:

As you will see in this community, the old people are the ones that are doing the agricultural work. The youth are busy with school work or watching television instead of helping their parents with their garden or livestock. They are not investing in livestock like the older generation used to do when we worked. I

guess to them agriculture is for us the old generation and not for them and we cannot force them to help when they do not want to (female community member, 02/10/2013).

Or, perhaps, the reality is more nuanced, and not simply a ‘contradiction’ – seen from the following remarks by one government official:

Most people tend to think [agricultural is for old people]. This is because the old people are the ones that seem to show interest in agricultural activities. As you have seen the people I was in a meeting with just before you came, majority of them are old people and only two of those that attended the meeting were young people. I believe that older people are not passing on the skills to the younger people; therefore, people will keep relating agriculture to old people (key informant, Department of Agriculture, 22/10/2013).

An important perception that indicated a bleak future for agriculture in the study community is implicit in youth responses to the Likert-scale statement that the ‘youth would rather seek employment in non-agricultural sectors’. Nearly 70% of respondents agreed with this statement, with less than 15% disagreeing (Figure 4). Sentiments echoing this survey result were picked up during the youth FGDs. The notable exception was one female FGD participant, who related the following personal anecdote:

I would honestly love to work in the agricultural sector. When growing up I was always hoping that I'd go to a school that took agriculture seriously and had it in their curriculum. I was somehow unfortunate when it comes to the school I am currently in, but I still want to study agriculture when I am in tertiary. I have a cousin who is an animal vet; he makes a lot of money and he keeps telling me that agriculture pays and I should do it if I love it. So I want to be a farmer, have my own livestock, sell milk and plant (in-school youth FGD participant, 01/10/2013).

Other FGD participants remarked along the following lines:

I do not dream of doing agriculture, I would rather do something else, anything as long as I will not be sweating and working too hard for such little benefits that this field offers (in-school youth FGD participant, 01/10/2013).

I am unemployed and am seeking employment by applying for posts in urban areas mostly. I wouldn't want to work in agriculture. I think it's too much work and

less pay unlike other jobs out there. There are better opportunities in the urban areas for one to be too concerned about the rain and soil (out-of-school youth FGD participant, 30/09/2013).

Young people think working for another man is an achievement; they do not want to own land and have farms, which will mean business of their own. They would rather work for someone else just so that they don't have to worry about the responsibilities that come with being your own boss. The schools teach them to be dependent on someone else for a pay at the end of a month, the schools are playing a big role in stereotyping our youth when it comes to agricultural activities (key informant, Department of Agriculture, 22/10/2013).

Urban areas seem to be the place where the youth want to move to, they don't know how to farm and they are not interested in farming. The youth that are in our farming programme do it because of the stipend they are given at the end of the month, otherwise if there was no stipend I do not believe that they will be doing agriculture (key informant, Department of Rural Development, 24/10/2013).

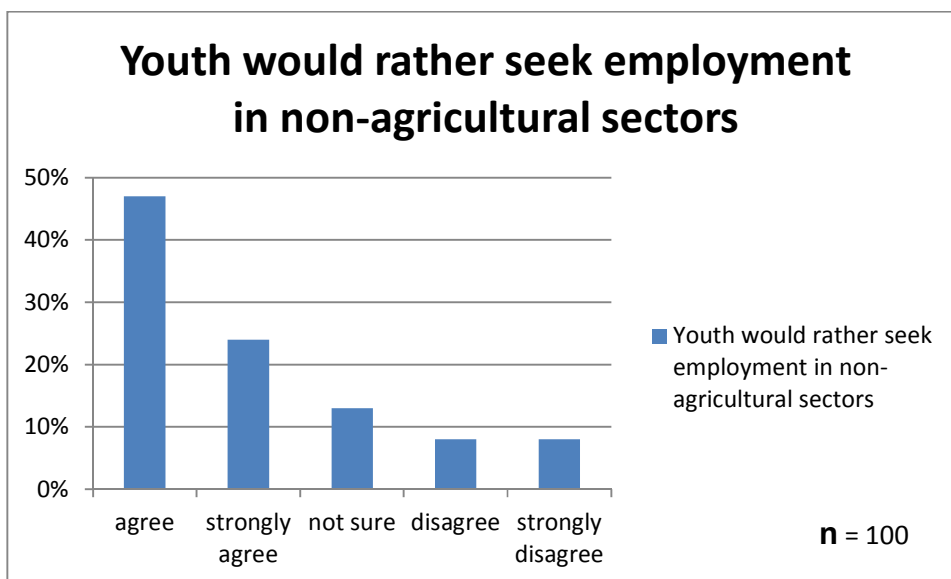


Figure 5: Youth seeking employment in non-agricultural sectors

As a further attempt to probe the future of agriculture from the perspective of the youth, another question was posed to the youth FGD participants: “if youth do have interest in agriculture currently, what do you think could threaten such interest in the medium and long term?” Both the in-school and out-of-school youth had strong views about what

such threats could be, and identified threats ranging from the 'natural' to the ideational and socio-economic:

There is drought, which is what I think could be a major threat to youth that are already taking part in agriculture. Also job opportunities in urban areas [can lure youths away from rural agriculture] (out-of-school youth FGD participant, 30/09/2013).

Lack of knowledge about agriculture may damage the future of agriculture and cause youth already participating in the field to move away from it. Another threat could be the declining of agricultural activities that is mainly caused by drought in our communities (in-school youth FGD participant, 01/10/2013).

Education is a threat to agriculture. In this school we are not encouraged or motivated to take agriculture as a course of study at tertiary. Therefore the education system is playing a big role in break the youth from the field of agriculture, it has enlightened most of young people and education has made us to move to better places such as urban areas and seek better futures than that which the agricultural activities could offers us (out-of-school youth FGD participant, 01/10/2013).

The same question was posed to other community members. Their responses highlighted 'lack of interest' and an education system that failed to emphasise the importance of agriculture:

The threat has always been there, the youth have been lacking interest in agriculture for years. They choose to move to urban areas to work in the mines since most of them are not well educated. Again education is also a threat as young people tend to think agriculture is for the uneducated people in the rural areas (community member, 02/10/2013).

Times have been changing; the youth do not consider agriculture to be important, and yet, for them to eat, agriculture has to take place. I believe what they feed them in schools is misleading them and causing them to not have interest in agricultural activities (community member respondent, 02/10/2013).

Interestingly, despite the perceived threats, the mini-survey data showed that most of the youth respondents saw agriculture as having a future both in the Eastern Cape Province and in their community, as responses to the Likert-scale statements in Tables 15 and 16 show.

Table 15: Likert scale responses about the future of rural agriculture in the Province

STATEMENT	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Rural agriculture has a future in the Eastern Cape	52%	19%	17%	7%	5%

n=100

Table 16: Likert scale responses about the future of agriculture in Centane

STATEMENT	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Agriculture has a future in my community	48%	17%	11%	24%	2%

n=100

These results found some corroboration during the youth FGD sessions:

The province has a good future when looking at the agricultural sector, there is government support that the farmers from other communities receive and therefore they will push for a better future as the government is behind them. I am sure if all communities received this support the Eastern Cape will be the best when it comes to agricultural activities (out-of-school youth, 30/09/2013).

Agriculture is important in this province as most people are still dependent on it for survival, therefore the Eastern Cape province still has a future in farming as I do not believe that people will prefer to go hungry rather than to feed themselves the best way they know they could, which is through farming. Agricultural activities might be declining but it will not die in this province only because the older generation and some young people still believe in it fully (in-school youth, 01/10/2013).

The older people believe in agriculture and they are still taking pride in doing it, I believe that when nothing better is showing for the youth they will finally take agricultural activities seriously and be farmers. The future is looking bright but if the youth had taken part in agriculture the future would look even brighter because there is so much land that is not being used anymore and the youth can start farming on those lands (out-of-school youth, 30/09/2013).

However, it is noteworthy that from the perspective of the government officials and local politicians, and even some youth FGD participants and interviewees, there was little optimism about the future of agriculture in the Eastern Cape:

Agriculture is declining every year; people are opting for buying rather than ploughing for themselves only because buying is less time-consuming and expensive. I have been telling my colleagues that I do not think I am going to plant on my gardens this year, it all looks like a waste of time and money as I spend so much money paying for the tractor and people to assist on the gardens but at the end of the day I don't even make a profit out of it. It is more like trying to keep what my family used to do or how they raised me; there is no money coming in at all. It is also worse this year, people have been planting vegetables and they are just not coming out right because of the drought. When I as a Department [of Agriculture] official think like this, what more do we then expect from the youth (key informant, Department of Agriculture, 22/10/2013)?

There is not much of a future when looking at agriculture, the youth are turning a blind eye on agricultural activities and we cannot blame them for that. Agriculture has been declining over the years now, what used to be fields for crops and maize has been dead for years now and as a community I would say more than 50% of the households had stopped farming completely over the years. People would rather go buy what they could otherwise farm for themselves because farming is too demanding and takes time (Local Councillor, 07/10/2013).

Agriculture does not have a bright future, there is so much resistance from the youth to be part of it and there is so much drought; it's made things worse over the years. We have not had rain since March or April this year. This therefore makes it hard for us to say that our communities have a bright future when looking at agricultural activities (in-school youth FGD participant, 01/10/2013).

The picture of agriculture in this community is not quite clear; there has been a decrease in the number of people in small scale farming. People have stopped farming their fields for a number of years and this makes it hard for me to really say if the future is looking good (in-school youth interviewee, 01/10/2013).

During the fieldwork, the researcher observed that most households did not participate in agriculture at all: the fields lay fallow and household vegetable gardens were few and far between - a situation that pointed to a grim future agriculturally and suggested that agriculture played very little role in how local people currently constructed their livelihoods (see Plates 5 and 6). It was during interviews with other community

members that the researcher picked up certain sentiments that might help explain the widespread neglect of agriculture in the community:

Most people started abandoning their farming fields a few years ago and now they are also abandoning their house gardens. There are only just a few households that still farm and plant their gardens and fields. This to me shows that households are being more dependent on grants, because I don't see other reasons for this (Community chief, 11/10/2013).



Plate 10: Abundant, unplanted fields

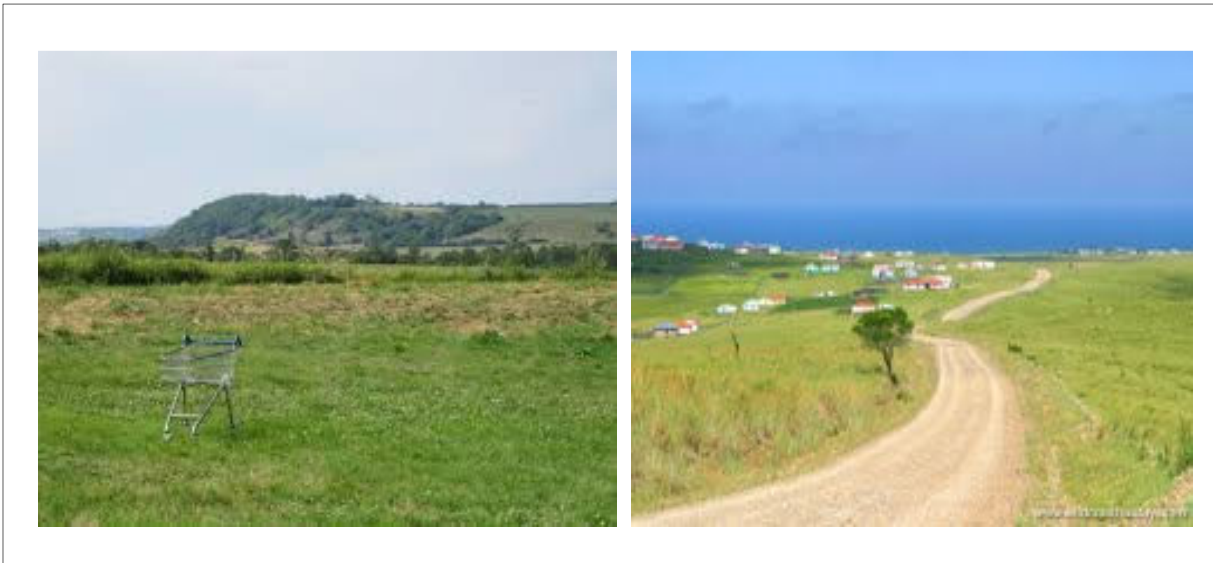


Plate 11: More abandoned, unplanted fields

5.4.3 Levels of government support for youth participation in rural agriculture

One of the items in the mini survey questionnaire was a Likert-scale statement that went thus: “With government support (grant/money) youth will consider taking part in agriculture”. The extent of agreement/disagreement to this statement was meant to help the researcher to gauge youth perceptions about the role of government support in engendering youth participation in rural agriculture. The findings are summarized in Table 17.

Table 17: Youth perceptions about the role of government support in youth participation in rural agriculture

STATEMENT	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
With government support (grant/money) youth will consider taking part in agriculture	52%	12%	24%	9%	3%

n=100

A majority of the respondents (64%) agreed with the statement. This was understandable, considering that a recurrent issue picked up during the study regarding the non-involvement of youth in agriculture was the ‘lack’ of government support. However, the relatively large number of respondents who were ‘not sure’ (24

respondents, or 24%) - twice the percentage of those that disagreed - was surprising to the researcher. Upon close examination of the data, the researcher found that a majority of those who were 'not sure' (17 out of 24 respondents) were youths in the in-school category. It was therefore instructive that during the FGD sessions with this category of respondents, the researcher recorded sentiments such as the following from a number of participants regarding the perceived role of government financial support vis-à-vis youth involvement in agriculture:

I do not believe that government support will change the attitude that the youth have towards agriculture; I believe it would just be waste of money and resources to just come and give such support to youth who are not even showing any interest in the field of agriculture. It would be a different thing if the youth were participating in agriculture and the government support comes in as assistance on something that is already started. Support works for people who are showing interest in agriculture (in-school youth FGD participant, 01/10/2013).

There was a clear doubt that government support would bring change in level of youth apathy towards agriculture. In the FGD session with the out-of-school youth, an almost opposite set of sentiments (optimism about the role of government support) came to the fore:

It is important that our government start supporting the youth in taking part in agricultural activities. I know that if support were to be given to us, we would be more than happy to grab it and be farmers that will help bring a better future for our communities (out-of-school youth FGD participant, 30/09/2013).

The researcher then sought the view of a key informant in the District Department of Agriculture. Despite the pessimism expressed by one key informant from this Department (quoted earlier) about agriculture as a "dying" rural occupation in the Centane region, the picture was that improved and well-targeted government support could make a difference:

There are a number of unemployed youth and I believe that government support in youth taking part in agriculture would mean a lot to young people and they would gain some skill and learn ways to make money for themselves (Department of Agriculture respondent, 24/10/2013).

This key informant conceded that the Department of Agriculture was 'not doing enough in reaching out to the youth in our rural areas' and that available assistance was 'not reaching the people it is intended for... we need to improve our ways of reaching the young blood'.

However, rather than highlight the need for government to embark on, or intensify, enlightenment campaigns to publicise available agricultural and rural development support programmes and ignite young people's interest in agriculture, another key informant (from the Department of Rural Development) maintained that it was the responsibility of those who needed assistance to approach the relevant government department:

There is support for youth to take part in agriculture, they need to start approaching the departments for assistance when they think we are not reaching out to their communities as much as needed. Otherwise the government is providing support to the youth through us the departments (Department of Rural Development key informant, 24/10/2013).

Overall, the survey revealed that there was poor awareness among the youth respondents about the availability of government support for youth agricultural activities: 69% disagreed that there was sufficient support; 17% disagreed, while 14% were 'not sure'. During the FGD sessions, some of the youth pointed out the inconsistency and inadequacy of whatever support was available:

The government does assist by providing cattle dipping in the communities even though sometimes the community people have to buy it for themselves, especially when government lacks the funds to support them. Or maybe I should say that the government used to provide the communities with cattle dipping and they have stopped now. That is all I think our farmers receive or used to receive from the government (in-school youth FGD participant, 01/10/2013).

They blamed the poor levels of support on, among other things, the complacency of community members, with some of the youth blaming the failures on their own ignorance about, and attitude toward, agriculture:

I believe that our parents must be blamed for not letting government know about such issues that affect our communities and the interests of the communities (out-of-school youth FGD participant, 30/09/2013).

Our community at large is responsible for seeking agricultural assistance and the Councillor is the one that should be playing the middle man between the community and the government departments. The Councilor should be responsible for seeking support for the communities (in-school youth FGD participant, 01/10/2013).

We as youth don't talk about such topics as agricultural assistance; we don't even think about starting our own projects as young people. We are not demanding any support from any agencies (in-school youth FGD participant, 01/10/2013).

We don't know where to go for government or any agency support; we are not well informed about such things in this community. So we just sit around and mind our own business (out-of-youth FGD participant, 30/09/2013).

Some of these findings were corroborated by qualitative interview data from the District Department of Agriculture, with another key informant (from the Department of Rural Development) even partially blaming local political opportunism and nepotism for the failure of some of government's outreach initiatives:

We do offer support but it seems like we are not reaching all the communities in our region, there are honestly only a few communities that do benefit from government support and only a number of youth benefit from this support as well. Again I will say we lack the means to reach out to all our communities with help to participate in agricultural activities (key informant, District Department of Agriculture, 22/10/2013).

There is support that the youth are receiving from our Department [of Rural Development], even though we stopped recruiting the youth to take part in agriculture a few years ago. I think the last intake we did was in 2010, and even so we were not able to reach all the communities and what we do is communicate with the Councillors and rely on them to spread the applications to their communities. This has been failing many young people in these communities as the Councillors seem to only give these opportunities to young people they choose (key informant, Department of Rural Development, 10/2013).

5.5 Conclusion

The foregoing has been an attempt to provide detailed empirical data on youth perspectives on rural agriculture in Centane Community – their levels of involvement, narratives and perceptions about their role in the sector, the role of government support, and the future of agriculture in the community. To make the data manageable, they have been presented under themes derived from the three research questions guiding the study. In the next chapter, the researcher ties the findings together and helps the reader to make sense of them, with particular regard to how they serve as evidence to answer the researcher questions as well as ‘talk back’ to some of the central issues reviewed in the literature earlier and those highlighted in the theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

The findings presented in the previous chapter highlight, among other things, that youth perspectives on rural agriculture are not as clear-cut as the literature on this subject often makes them out to be. This is one of the main points that will be touched on in this chapter. However, the study's key findings will first be summarized (in line with each of the research questions). A discussion of the findings then follows. Finally, conclusions are drawn and some recommendations proffered.

6.2 Summary of findings

Presented below is a summary of study's key findings:

6.2.1 Between 'involvement' and 'interest'

Within the context of the first research question, the study found the following:

- i. There was widespread lack of youth involvement in agriculture in the study community. Only 35% of youth were currently involved in agriculture; 65% were not involved.
- ii. While the mini survey revealed widespread 'lack of interest' in agriculture among the youth, there was no clear empirical evidence that this is what informed the lack of youth involvement in agriculture.
- iii. From the FGD data, lack of involvement in agriculture appeared to be due to the absence of specific 'incentives', in addition to what some respondents referred to as the 'laziness' of the youth.
- iv. Respondents blamed factors such as lack of parental support and lack of government support, and lack of information.

- v. The various 'lacks' appeared to constitute 'push' factors, when compared to the 'pull' of wage employment opportunities in the cities.
- vi. Against the backdrop of rural agriculture operating at subsistence levels, the youth viewed it as not offering a viable route to the "good life"

6.2.2 Local narratives and perceptions

The following are the main findings pertaining to local narratives and perceptions:

- i. Despite the high level of acknowledgment (78% of youth respondents) in the community that the youth were "turning away" from agriculture, and the researcher's observation that arable fields in and around the community lay uncultivated, the overall youth perception of rural agriculture could not be described as negative.
- ii. 52% of youth respondents disagreed with the notion that agriculture was a "dirty activity"; 65% disagreed that it was an occupation for "old people".
- iii. A majority of youth respondents (65%) saw agriculture as an "appealing field".
- iv. Views were almost evenly split between youth respondents who saw agriculture as a "dying" occupation (48%) and those who held an opposite view (32%) – a high proportion of respondents were "not sure".
- v. Similarly, there was nearly an even split between youth respondents who saw agriculture as "time consuming" and those who held an opposite view.
- vi. Notions of the youth as "lazy" and of agriculture as a "hard job" and a "time-consuming" activity came more from non-youth community members interviewed.

- vii. One area of consensus among the respondents (youth and non-youth) was that drought played a major role in the low levels of involvement in agricultural activities by community members.
- viii. A view was expressed by a key authority figure in the study community that the availability of social grants might have contributed to the “abandonment” of agriculture by many community members.
- ix. There was an acknowledgment by respondents (youth and non-youth) that in addition to the fact of young people harbouring dreams of pursuing their livelihoods in the cities and local schools not placing an emphasis on agriculture, old people were not passing on farming skills to the youth.
- x. Drought was reported as a problem affecting agriculture in the area.
- xi. While the narratives showed that the combination of the above factors posed a threat to agriculture in the community, and despite a general lack of optimism about agriculture, a majority of the youth survey respondents (65%) did not feel that agriculture was irredeemably doomed in the community.

6.2.3 Government policy and youth involvement in agriculture

The research question about how supportive government policies were towards youth involvement in agriculture led the researcher to the following key evidence:

- i. A clear majority (64%) of youth survey respondents believed that government had a key role to play in engendering interest in agriculture among the youth. Most of the respondents who held this view were out-of-school youth respondents.
- ii. Several of the youth respondents who were “not sure” (24%) about whether government’s support could re-energise agriculture, disclosed during FGDs that the level of apathy amongst the youth was too deep and could put to waste any

material/financial investment that government could make to boost youth's interest. Most of the respondents who held this view were in-school youth respondents.

- iii. Key informants in the relevant government departments acknowledged that government was not providing sufficient support to spur youth's involvement in agriculture.
- iv. The blame for the lack of government support for youth involvement, at least from the point of view of government officials, was placed on the youth themselves, who "failed" to alert government about their needs.
- v. Community members reported, and the government officials acknowledged, that the flow of available support from government was both inadequate and inconsistent.

6.3 Discussion

Taken together, the above findings highlight a number of issues, some of which relate to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two of this work. First is a methodological issue. It is clear from the findings that neither a survey alone, nor FGDs alone – nor even in-depth interviews alone – would have been sufficient to uncover the complex sentiments associated with community (and particularly youth) apathy towards agriculture in Centane community. The picture often painted in the literature is that of rural youths "lacking interest" in agriculture. Such a conclusion can be reached simply by focusing on the small proportion of rural youths who are actively involved in agricultural activities. In the present study, only a little over 30% of youth were active.

However, that is an obscured picture. Through a triangulation of methods, as has been done in this study, it becomes possible to uncover some hidden dimensions of reality, and perhaps come to a slightly different conclusion. It becomes possible to state, for example, that "low levels of involvement" did not necessarily amount to a "lack of interest". In fact, what comes out when the mini survey results are taken together with the qualitative data is that youths in Centane do not find sufficient *incentives* to take

agriculture as a “career path”. In any event, the subsistence levels at which existing agricultural activities operate in the community are strong enough as disincentives for young people to wrap their dreams around rural agriculture – certainly, not in the face of the strong magnetic pull cast by cities a few hundred kilometres away.

The study reveals that few young people are currently involved in agriculture in the community and that arable land in and around the community lies uncultivated – indeed, abandoned. One of the reasons for this state of affairs is drought. These findings support Shackleton et al’s (2013: 1) view that the abandonment of farming is a growing phenomenon the world over. According to these authors, a huge number of households no longer take part in farming, fewer people take to farming every year, and those that do farm at all do so on a smaller scale, with the number of farming families dwindling yearly. They also point out that environmental factors are among the “drivers of abandonment of farming” (Shackleton et al. (2013: 1).

That the youth in Centane are not farming is thus not necessarily because they lack interest in agriculture. What they lack – and this supports FANRPAN’s (2012) assertion, reviewed in Chapter Two - is the *motivation* to be in agriculture. There is, as the respondents pointed out, a dearth of knowledge about what farming means in terms of building sustainable livelihoods. Parents do not actively pass farming skills to the young, schools do not actively emphasise the importance of agriculture, and government does not actively invest in rural agriculture. As such young people find themselves in a milieu where they know of farming only as a subsistence activity involving the herding of a few goats and the planting of a few cabbages in the back garden. As White (2012) states, the youth have seen their parents suffer and live in poverty in the face of subsistence agriculture, and desire to stop such poverty from becoming intergenerational. As their heads swell with urban dreams, little do they know the depth of poverty they could plunge themselves into in the urban centres should they lack the right preparations to take advantage of decent employment opportunities that exist in cities.

It is instructive from the apparent “contradictions” in the field findings that researchers interested in understanding social dynamics in rural communities not simply walk away

with data from a single method of inquiry, as they could end up misrepresenting the very reality they seek to understand and explain.

The data also reveal what may well be an underlying resentment in the study community of the way government relates with communities. A fairly large proportion of the youth respondents (24%) were “not sure” about whether government’s support could re-energise agriculture by stimulating the interest of young people in this field. Similarly, a relatively large proportion of youth respondents were “not sure” about the future of agriculture in the community. Besides, key informants from the relevant government departments acknowledged that existing support for rural agriculture was inadequate. Considering that this is a rural community surrounded by arable fields, such responses could mean that the community’s everyday livelihood challenges are not tackled holistically. Hence, many young people appear not to know who should play what role in reversing the poverty spiral. Against the backdrop of these findings, the notion (reviewed in Chapter Two) that (rural) youth are too “lazy” to farm (and this was voiced by a few respondents in the field) appears to only superficially reflect, if at all it does, true rural yearnings and bigger questions vis-à-vis rural agriculture and rural poverty.

One further point must be highlighted in this discussion, and that is the view expressed by some of the in-school and out-of-school youth respondents that agriculture is not emphasised in the school curriculum and thus school-going youths graduate with little or no knowledge of the true livelihood and economic value of the vast arable land that surrounds them. The researcher learnt during the fieldwork that local schools do not offer agriculture in their curriculum, nor do they use the school gardens for any meaningful agricultural activities. These findings echo the sentiments that have for years been expressed by scholars and social commentators alike (see White, 2012) – that the school curriculum in many African countries is not connected to the socio-cultural, economic and ecological realities of African children. The researcher found it noteworthy that the remark about this disconnectedness was voiced by young people themselves. There is no doubt that each new generation of rural youth grows up wanting to be better educated than their parents, but this has not been matched with the

expansion of employment opportunities for the growing numbers of relatively educated youth (White, 2012). Empirical data from Centane community suggests that the education system plays an important role in directing young people's attention to agriculture – that is, in making the youth to view this sector as pivotal to rural socio-economic renewal. White (2012 - citing Crawford 2011), rightly points out that the youth are deprived of many opportunities and choices and that many wealthy countries are just beginning to understand what has been lost when manual work becomes devalued and disappears as a component of educational curricula.

Finally, one must guard against naïve “solutionism” when it comes to rural agriculture. Granted, there is an implicit suggestion in the data presented and discussed in this study that agriculture is important for rural renewal. The clamour by community members for government support for rural agriculture has also been reported. Yet, one cannot ignore the experience of Nigeria (see Akpan, 2010), where, despite the relative availability of government support for youth participation in agriculture (in the form of agricultural loan schemes), the take-up of such support by the youth remains insignificant. Indeed, Akpan reports that despite the availability of such support, youth participation in agriculture has been on the decline. All the same, from the field data, youth in Centane do not know of available support and so the question of them availing themselves of it does not even arise. What is more, available opportunities are channeled to communities through middlemen and local politicians – which expose the incentive process to local opportunism, elite capture and abuse. What this reveals is that the youth in Centane appear to have very few livelihood choices. As White (2012) states, the youth have seen their parents suffer and live in poverty when they owned farming land and livestock.

6.4 Recommendations

In the light of the findings and the foregoing discussion, the following recommendations may be proffered:

- i. Every effort must be made by the state, community members and other stakeholders to ensure that the youth appreciate and take advantage of the true livelihood (socio-economic and cultural) value of the physical environment.
- ii. Young people must be consciously encouraged to participate in agriculture, as it remains a vital sector for engendering rural renewal in South Africa. It is noteworthy that the youth already appear to see this sector as potentially “viable” (a majority of respondents see agriculture as “an appealing field”).
- iii. Community development initiatives (whether rural- or urban-targeted) easily run the risk of being caught in the vagaries of local politics, local opportunism and elite capture. This problem must be recognised by providers of rural agricultural incentives, and efforts made to check it. Development failures cannot perpetually be a case of “the dog ate my homework”!
- iv. The role of welfare grant must be continually and carefully studied so as to understand and check its unanticipated consequences.
- v. While rural agriculture has been the main focus of this study, the emphasis must be made that the improvement of livelihoods in rural communities must be tackled holistically – and not just through the improvement of agriculture. The rural space must be made “liveable” in every way, to stem the tide of unnecessary rural-urban migration.
- vi. Government departments responsible for rural development must be truly knowledgeable about rural dynamics and perform above board. Performance failures in these departments have grave implications for the well-being of the rural masses, and could have implications for socio-economic and political stability not only in the rural areas but in the country as a whole.

6.5 Conclusion

It can be concluded from the findings of this study that although rural agriculture is gravely imperiled in Centane community, it is not irredeemably so. Although this study was not intended to be generalised (given its limited empirical and methodological scope) this might be indicative of the state of rural agriculture in the Eastern Cape as a whole. Poor inter-generational transfer of vital local (agricultural) knowledge, a disconnected school curriculum, weak governmental intervention, the myth of “urban bliss”, natural constraints (such as drought), and a perception of welfare grants as a cheap “substitute” for manual work – all combine to distance local residence from a land that could sustain livelihoods and community well-being in a very profound way. From a rural development point of view, this is a dangerous combination indeed, and confronting it must be done from many fronts – as recommended in this study.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE MINI SURVEY ON RURAL YOUTH

My name is Zuzeka Prudence Mkra and I aim to write and analyze discussions about the youth involvement in rural agriculture in the Centane community, Mquma local municipality. I am currently completing a Masters dissertation in Sociology (Rural Development) at the University of Fort Hare in East London.

- Please be informed that you are under no obligation to participate in the study, furthermore participation is completely voluntary and information gathered will be for academic purposes only.

SECTION A

(Please tick appropriate box with an X)

DEMOGRAPHY

GENDER: FEMALE MALE AGE:

Educational Attainment:

High school or lower Grade 12 Tertiary education

Graduate Post graduate

Other , please specify: _____

OCCUPATION: _____

SECTION B

Are you currently involved in agriculture?

Yes No

If yes what type? Please make a circle on the appropriate answer.

- Maize, Vegetables, Fruits, Soya Beans, Animal Production

Other (please specify)

.....

SECTION C

Please respond marking with an X in the column which statement describe(s) your level of interest and most closely reflect(s) your agreement or disagreement with each statement.

STATEMENT	DISAGREE STRONGLY	DISAGREE	NOT SURE	AGREE	AGREE STRONGLY
• Agriculture is an appealing field to work in.					
• If given government support (grant/money) youth will consider doing agriculture.					
• Agriculture is a dirty activity, without proper facilities.					
• The youth “lack interest” in agriculture because they are lazy.					
• I feel that agriculture in this community has a bright future.					
• Agricultural activities are time consuming.					

Please respond marking with an X in the column which statement describe(s) your views and most closely reflect(s) your agreement or disagreement with each statement.

STATEMENT	DISAGREE STRONGLY	DISAGREE	NOT SURE	AGREE	AGREE STRONGLY
• Rural agriculture has a future in the Eastern Cape.					
• I feel that the youth is turning away from agricultural activities.					
• Agriculture is dying in this community.					
• Agriculture is for old people.					
• Youth would rather seek employment in non agricultural sectors.					

STATEMENT	DISAGREE STRONGLY	DISAGREE	NOT SURE	AGREE	AGREE STRONGLY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture is a non appealing field to work in. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance for Youth agricultural services is essential. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth interest in agriculture is good. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural support for youth is present. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a number of youth owning farms in this community. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is good government/ agency support for agricultural activities in this community. 					

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.