

DYNAMICS AFFECTING SUBSISTENCE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION:

**An Exploration of a Case Study of subsistence crop production within a rural
community in the Ingwe Municipality of Southern KwaZulu-Natal**

By

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, _____ (Murray Kay Smith), declare that the work presented in this dissertation is my original work, gathered and utilised especially to fulfil the purpose of this study. It has not been previously submitted to any other university for the purpose of a degree. All work used in this dissertation has been duly acknowledged and cited.

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture forms the livelihood basis of several billion people around the world. Despite the increasing trend for rural to urban migration the problems associated with poverty are expected to remain predominantly rural for some time into the future. The challenges associated with rural poverty are particularly important in South Africa where the remaining effects of the oppressive apartheid regime are still vividly evident. The rural population are often stranded in areas of stagnant economic growth and minimal employment opportunities further compounded by low levels of education. The livelihoods of these rural communities, in the former homelands, are often confined to a heavy reliance on remittance incomes and agriculture. However, in the recent past the level of agricultural activity in these rural homelands appears to be declining. This has direct implications for the development agenda in these rural areas. This study is an examination of the various dynamics which have affected the subsistence agriculture sector within a specific community in the former homeland of KwaZulu in Southern KwaZulu-Natal. The responses of 12 respondents, representing independent households, were recorded along with four purposive interviews with relevant role players in the agricultural sector and in the rural community. The responses shed some light on the multifaceted dynamics which have played an important role in how individual households and the community at large make livelihood choices and how subsistence agriculture fits into these decisions. An increasing reliance on money as the basis of livelihood decisions is resulting in the reliance on agriculture shifting away from a central foundation of household livelihood towards a more supplementary form of food source and risk diversion. Shifting cultural norms have resulted in women and the youth becoming less involved in farming practices in general, which may have been influenced by the expansion of social grants into the rural communities. The changes in dynamics which influence local community and household livelihood decisions are important to consider when determining a possible development initiative in these rural areas.

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This work is dedicated to the people of the former Homelands of South Africa
To those who work the soil

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Subsistence agriculture forms an important part of the rural South African landscape and is an important mode of livelihood for a substantial number of the rural poor, especially within the former homelands where it continues to form one of the dominant modes of production (Pauw, 2007). The study sets out to examine the dynamics of subsistence production in a specific locality in an attempt to contribute to broader thinking around factors impacting on forms of household subsistence production. The fact that the majority of the world's poor live in a rural environment has highlighted the fact that agriculture is a pivotal link between the poor and a sustainable form of livelihood.

In South Africa, the subsistence agricultural sector is inextricably framed by the historical context from which the country has emerged as a result of underdevelopment as a policy by-product of both the colonial and apartheid regimes (du Toit, 2005). Therefore the role of agriculture, with respect to rural livelihoods and poverty alleviation within the rural black population, is one that has been inherently compromised. Furthermore, there is a problem of sustained high levels of poverty in what, despite growing urbanisation, remains a predominantly rural concern within South Africa. Consequently, the issue of rural livelihoods related to subsistence agricultural production remains a relevant arena of study. In order to cast some light on how communities have responded to dynamics around subsistence production within their livelihood strategies, this research explores a case study community within the Ingwe Municipality in Southern KwaZulu-Natal.

Subsistence production is defined in this study as non-market production, produced for the purpose of household consumption. Households engaged in subsistence agriculture are primarily concerned with establishing a degree of self-sufficiency through the practice of agriculture (McAlister, 2001). The involvement of a household in subsistence living is often not the only means by which to survive however it forms an important supplementary source of nutrition and means of survival (McAlister, 2001).

The case study group is situated in the former KwaZulu homeland in southern KwaZulu-Natal in a small rural community called the Isibonelo Esihle tribal area. Isibonelo Esihle is part of the Ingwe local municipality which is situated in the south west of the KwaZulu-Natal Province in the Sisonke District Municipality (Figure 1). Sisonke shares a border with Lesotho on the west and the Eastern Cape Province to the south. The district is made up of the following five Local Municipalities: Ingwe, Umzimkhulu, KwaSani, Ubuhlebezwe and Greater Kokstad (Sisonke 2010). The district has a population of approximately 500 000 people who live primarily in a rural context. One of the major issues facing the district is the high rate of unemployment, with just over 10 percent of the population (50 000 people) being employed within the district (Sisonke 2010). The local economy is dominated by commercial agriculture and forestry which along with government services provide the basis for the majority of the local employment.

The Ingwe Municipality has a population of 114 120 which is comprised of 22 289 households which are mainly within the rural traditional areas (Ingwe Municipality, 2010). Approximately 81 percent of the population lives in a rural context. The official statistics for those of working age population, from 15 to 60 years of age, within Ingwe is that 12 percent are employed, the unemployment rate is 29 percent and the remainder are in the category „other“ which includes those who are discouraged work seekers. The age profile of the population is however highly skewed towards those under the age of 35 (76 percent of the population is under the age of 35). This translates into a population which has a high incidence of unemployed youth or else discouraged youth. The population within Ingwe is furthermore affected by an exceptionally high incidence of HIV/AIDS infection, at nearly 36 percent of the population testing positive (Ingwe Municipality, 2010).

The economy of Ingwe Municipality is primarily based on a well-established, highly productive commercial farming sector. The main commercial farming enterprises are dairy and timber with beef and cash crops to a lesser extent. The traditional settlement areas are, however, underdeveloped with poor infrastructure, fragmented land holdings

and broken terrain cited as major constraints to further development in the agricultural sector in these areas (Ingwe Municipality, 2010). Due to the limited prospects for further development of the local economy it is expected that there will continue to be an exodus of people seeking employment in the larger urban areas (Ingwe Municipality, 2010).

Despite its minimal contribution to the local economy at large, agriculture in the rural areas forms the most significant form of livelihood for the majority of the local population. The dominant forms of agriculture within these tribal areas are comprised of traditional ranching of cattle in the mountainous areas with small scale subsistence crop production on arable allotments. The returns to agriculture are however, negatively affected by overgrazing and soil erosion within these areas and the lack of formal land rights results in minimal formal regulation against overstocking and counterproductive livestock practices (Ingwe Municipality, 2010).

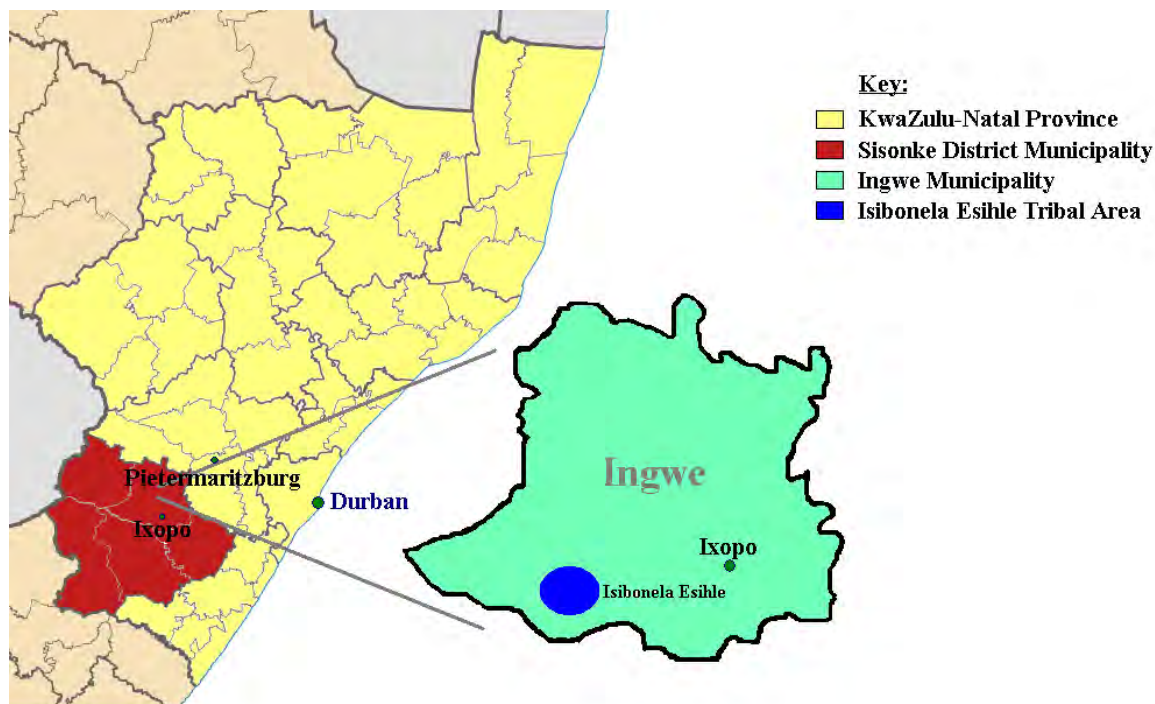


Figure 1: Location of the case study area: Isibonelo Esihle
(Source: Adapted from Sisonke 2010)

The basis for this study is to capture the various dynamics which affect subsistence agriculture within a case specific area in rural KwaZulu-Natal. It is hoped that as a result of this study some of the underlying dynamics which influence subsistence agriculture and rural livelihoods in the whole of South Africa may be revealed. In this way it will hopefully add to a greater understanding of the development potential of agriculture in creating sustainable rural livelihoods in South Africa.

Having introduced the study and given a background to the study area in the first chapter, the remainder of this study will be divided into five chapters. Chapter two is the literature review, which assesses the relevant literature pertaining to subsistence agriculture and sustainable livelihoods from both an international and a national perspective. Chapter three, the methodology, gives an overview of the method of data capture and analysis used in the study followed with the major constraints the study faced. Chapter four, the results, presents the findings of the study where the main themes of the respondents' responses are presented. Chapter five, the analysis chapter, presents the major findings of the study along with a more in-depth analysis of the findings. Finally, the conclusion chapter is an overview of the study's findings and what implications this could have for a development agenda based on sustainable livelihoods and subsistence agriculture in South Africa.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Throughout the developing world the issue of rural development is one of the most important facets in long term planning and development initiatives. The majority of the world's poor are living in rural areas and despite urbanisation the trend of rural poverty is set to continue, in most places, well into the future. For the most part agriculture forms the basis of the rural poor's livelihoods and so in order to directly target these poor it makes sense to target development of agriculture as a more sustainable form of livelihood for these people. Despite the limitations of agriculture as a source of economic growth and development it remains one of the most important foundational building blocks of an economy.

The historical context of South Africa's turbulent political past left an indelible mark on the country's people, which stands out particularly starkly within the rural areas of the country. The remnants of consequences of the racial segregation policy, such as the Natives Land Act 1913 are still evident today, especially in the rural areas which constitute the former homelands which stood as underdeveloped islands within the former republic of South Africa (Bernstein, 1997). The current situation within these homelands has improved somewhat with regard to public services however they still remain vastly underdeveloped and predominantly poor.

The commercial farming sector within South Africa is highly developed and plays an important role within the country as an important source of food security, employment creation and in its contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The commercial farming sector is predominated by relatively large scale enterprises which are white owned. This trend did not happen by chance. During apartheid there was direct intervention through the state to create and develop a large scale commercial farming sector. Through preferential policies and the creation of marketing control boards the farming industry was catapulted into a capitalist mode of production.

The homelands were purposefully underdeveloped in order to ensure that the African inhabitants would be reliant, on the much larger formal economy within the Republic, for employment. This ensured there would be a constant supply of cheap labour for the large capital interests within the country, such as mining, manufacturing and farming. These rural homelands are characterised by a low level of productivity however there is a significant reliance on the small scale subsistence production as a form of supplementary production in a bid to create a diversified sustainable livelihood (Leibbrandt et.al, 2010).

This review of literature covers the issues pertaining to subsistence agriculture, starting off by giving an international perspective of the role of agriculture in development and the prevalence of subsistence agriculture on a global scale. Secondly, the current context of South African agriculture and an overview of the challenges facing a development agenda within the country is given. Thirdly, the agrarian history of South Africa and the development of the homelands and how that is impacting on the current situation within the country. Fourthly, an overview of the policy environment which allowed the development of the current agricultural sector and how this needs to change in order to allow the development of a small scale farming industry. Fifthly, continuing on from the previous point, this section covers the historical development of the commercial farming sector within the country. The following three sections cover the actual scenario of the subsistence sector within the homelands and analyses some of the trends and their causes which have been identified in the sector. These are followed by an assessment of some initiatives which Government has undertaken so far in order to try and use agriculture as a development tool. Finally the issue of sustainable development is dealt with and the various elements which need to be considered if this type of development initiative is used as a guide for rural development.

2.2 International Context of Rural Poverty and Agriculture

It is estimated that, within developing countries, three out of every four poor people live in a rural area (World Bank 2008a). It is further estimated that 2.1 billion people live

below the \$2 a day poverty line and 880 million on less than \$1 a day. Agriculture forms the basis of about 86 percent of all rural people's livelihoods from around the world. It provides employment to 1.3 billion people and is an important form of „safety net“ for many employed and unemployed people, especially in countries with limited welfare systems. There are approximately 5.5 billion people within the developing world, of these 3 billion live in rural areas and it is estimated 2.5 billion of these people live in households engaged in agriculture of some sort.

Agricultural production is of particular importance within Sub-Saharan Africa which has a population well over 700 million people, of which over 400 million are directly reliant on agriculture for their livelihood (Dixon *et al*, 2001). Despite a rapid rate of rural to urban migration it is estimated that the number of rural poor within Sub-Sahara will remain above the urban poor until at least 2040, therefore agriculture will still be of vital importance to stabilise the livelihoods of the majority of the regions poor into the future (World Bank, 2008c).

Agriculture has been identified, by the World Bank, as a key area for spurring growth, improving food security and fighting poverty. Growth in agricultural productivity can provide a basis for stimulating other parts of the economy to expand and develop. However a broad scale improvement in productivity requires the expansion of subsistence production into commercial smallholder surplus production farming. Hunger and poverty are often inextricably linked to one another. While it is obvious that insufficient income to purchase food will result in household food insecurity it is also true that hunger contributes to poverty through a reduction in household labour productivity, perpetuating the cycle of poverty (Dixon *et al*, 2001).

Apart from the direct impact a growth in agriculture has on reducing poverty in rural areas, it plays an important facilitator role in the growth of the rest of the economy and has the potential to positively contribute to the development agenda of a country in several broad ways. As an active player and growth sector within the economy agriculture provides numerous raw materials; labour opportunities; source of demand for

manufactured goods and services (Ashley and Maxwell, 2001). More efficiently produced food has an impact on food security and has a stabilising effect on the price of food, which in turn has a direct impact on wage costs and competitiveness of the countries labour. Moreover as an enterprise expands into commercial activity, agriculture can become a source of foreign exchange earnings; savings and capital accumulation, stimulating economic growth in other sectors through the multiplier effect (Dixon *et al*, 2001). The promotion of a small scale commercial farming enterprises has a greater impact on the development of the local non-farm economy than does the expansion of the large scale enterprises who often rely heavily on imported technology and inputs (Ngqangeni, 1999).

The comparative advantage within most of the developing world will be trading within primary sectors of mining and agriculture for some time into the future. According to the World Bank's development report for agriculture 2008 there are three types of developing world economy: Agricultural-based economy, Transforming economy and Urbanised economy. Some of the main distinctions between the three economy classes are: the contribution of agriculture to GDP, GDP per capita and the proportion of the population living in rural areas. Within agriculture-based economies, on average 32 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) and 65 percent of the workforce are directly linked to agriculture. The contribution of agriculture to GDP for transforming and urbanised economies is approximately 13 percent and 6 percent respectively. Agricultural-based economies are usually characterised by low GDP per capita with a large proportion of the population living in rural poverty. However, despite the various benefits which result from a growth in the agricultural sector, agricultural-based economies throughout the world continually reduce the amount of public expenditure targeted towards the sector (World Bank, 2008b).

The livelihood's of the rural poor, in a global context, is intrinsically tied to both the future of agriculture and the state of the natural environment within which they live. The heterogeneous nature of the rural poor both internationally and within individual countries has deep implications for the policy requirements and the suitability of

agriculture, in its different forms, as a development initiative. However the ability of agricultural growth to affect a shift in poverty reduction has been proven across all country types. Results show that GDP growth which originated from an improvement in agricultural productivity is at least twice as effective in reducing poverty as growth in GDP originating from other sectors in the economy (World Bank, 2008a). According to Dixon *et al* (2001) agricultural growth has the potential to not only reduce rural poverty but that it is even more effective at reducing urban poverty than urban growth itself. Agriculture alone will not be enough to fully eradicate poverty and hunger however it can be an extremely powerful tool for that purpose.

Despite the fact that within the developing world the majority of the food produced is through rural small scale and subsistence farmers it is usually these same rural poor who suffer from food insecurity. It has been predicted by the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) that by 2030 the majority of the world's population will reside in urban areas however the size of the urban population is expected to remain static over this time (Dixon *et al* 2001). Notwithstanding the rapid rate of rural to urban migration, poverty is expected to remain a largely rural problem for some time well into the future. The World Research Institute (WRI) asserts that currently 75 percent of all poverty is rural and this will only change marginally down to 60 percent over the next 20 years. These predictions have direct implications for the way in which the rural landscape is viewed in its role for development and poverty alleviation in developing countries. Dealing with poverty and hunger is inextricably linked to the confrontation of the problems within agriculture and more specifically small scale and subsistence agriculture, which is the predominant form of production in developing regions (McCalla, 1997).

The heterogeneity within the agricultural sector is evident by the contrast of large scale commercial enterprises coexisting alongside smallholder farmers. This is further differentiated among smallholders to commercial small scale producers and subsistence producers. Subsistence producers consume the majority of their produce and participate in the market by selling their labour power and buying what they are unable to produce.

Subsistence farmers have the highest incidence of impoverishment out of all the various categories of farming. Membership within these categories is often affected by a multifaceted mix of different characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, asset base, social status and skill endowment which determine the individual's ability to utilise available opportunities and resources. These have to be taken into account when designing any policy or institutional intervention in the fight against poverty to ensure the correct people are targeted with the necessary assistance (Miracle, 2001).

The level of heterogeneity amongst small scale and subsistence producers is also clearly evident by the vastly different restrictions which face each individual. There is a considerable amount of uniformity in the type of constraints and decisions which face all subsistence producers, however, they form a complex set of interrelationships which vary for each individual, area and country. These elements include the level of isolation, level of expected returns, other sources of income, the ownership structure of the land, available labour and capital restrictions (Miracle, 2001). Despite the difficulties faced in farming, developing countries around the world such as in Asia, Latin America and even in large parts of Africa, there is a significant dependence on subsistence production within their rural economies.

Over the past century, global agricultural output has grown at a faster rate than the demand for food, the real prices of food has fallen and the proportion of rural people living in poverty has declined (Binswanger and Deininger, 1997). However this trend has not been uniform among all developing countries and regions, with some countries and regions experiencing strong agricultural growth while other areas have been stagnating and even declining in output. The supply side growth of agriculture within a specific country or area is highly dependent on the macroeconomic environment, the structure of the agricultural sector and the provision of public goods to the farming sector. These three factors are guided by the overarching policy environment which persists within the country and the level of emphasis which is placed on agriculture as a source of development and growth. Binswanger and Deininger (1997) assert that there is a direct relationship between the government policies and variations in agricultural productivity.

Agricultural policies are often highly distorted within developing countries; there is frequently a bias against agriculture in favour of industry. Through a multitude of inadequate policies; for instance, the imposition of high direct taxes along with an array of indirect taxes such as over valued exchange rates, industrial protection and import duties. Furthermore the inadequate promotion of a country's comparative advantage where competitive commodities were heavily taxed while uncompetitive crops were protected created an investment climate where agriculture was negatively prejudiced against. Inadequate state support where the extraction of resources, by the state, out of the agricultural sector was greater than their investment into the sector, what's more, the little which is invested into the sector is often appropriated by large capital interests with little effect on the small farmers and landless labourers who need it most (Binswanger and Deininger, 1997).

There are normally a variety of different interest groups which have an influence on the type and form of agricultural policies within a country. In a situation where the various interest groups involved in the political bargaining for policy formation are equally strong, it is more likely that the final policy outcomes will be efficiency enhancing and growth promoting. However in the event that one bargaining group holds the majority of power then there is greater potential for efficiency reduction, especially for those who are politically underrepresented. The difficulty for collective action within the poor rural peasants is an obvious explanation why negative policy regimes against agriculture persist (Binswanger and Deininger, 1997).

The only possibility for a reform of power-relations is the decentralisation and reformation of local governments to become more representative. This way the power of the ruling elite is diminished and there is greater participation by all the parties involved. Small farmers are therefore empowered to become more involved in planning and implementing policies and projects which will benefit them (Binswanger and Deininger, 1997).

2.3 Current South African Context

South Africa is in the difficult position of being caught as a middle income country, where it is not technologically advanced enough to compete with developed countries. Coupled with this is the fact that the country has a skills shortage, so a large proportion of the workforce is unskilled, and at the same time its labour is not cheap enough to compete with low income countries. This persistent development issue has remained a pervasive element of the South African labour force and will continue to remain so until the underlying structural foundations of the economy are shifted to overcome the binding constraints.

The current directive from the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) is to use agriculture as a catalyst for considerable job creation over the short to medium term for South Africa. As outlined within the Government's new policy directive document, called the New Growth Path (NGP), agriculture is set to deliver an additional 300 000 new jobs over the next three to four years with an additional 114 000 jobs to be created in the upstream processing and manufacturing sector for agriculture. The majority of these jobs will be created within the commercial smallholder sector which will be primarily run in conjunction with the new land reform beneficiaries (DAFF, 2011).

The agricultural sector within South Africa currently contributes just over 3% directly towards Gross Domestic Product (GDP); however, there is a considerably larger contribution through the backwards and forwards linkages into the economy. The composition of the agricultural economy is dominated by large scale commercial farming operations. There are about 1.1 million farming operations within South Africa; of which there are roughly 40 000 commercial farmers almost exclusively within the former republic of South Africa with the remainder, mainly small-scale and subsistence farmers, being situated within the former homelands. The former republic of South Africa consisted of approximately 86% of all available farm land while the remaining 14% was designated to the former homelands (DAFF, 2010).

Besides its contribution towards food security, one of the most significant roles which agriculture fulfils is through employment. There are over 700 000 people who are employed within the formal, commercial agricultural sector and it is estimated a further 1 million households within the smallholder sector either through full time or part time employment (DAFF, 2010). Economic growth which is stimulated from the agricultural sector has a positive effect on the reduction of both rural and urban poverty levels however economic growth stimulated from within the urban areas is likely to only affect urban poverty levels (Ashley and Maxwell, 2001).

It is estimated 13 million people live within the former homelands created by the former apartheid government. Of the approximately 2.5 million households more than 70% have access to arable land for farming purposes however more than 800 000 of these households reported that the land they had access to, was smaller than 1 hectare (Ha). An overwhelming majority of these households (93%) are reliant on some form of agriculture to supplement their livelihoods; however income generation through agriculture is rather insignificant with the primary reason for cultivation being for household consumption (StatsSA, 2002). It was reported in 2002 that as little as 3% of all households relied exclusively on agriculture as the only source of household income with the majority having an external source of revenue, such as social grant or wages, which was complemented by agricultural production. Furthermore only 6% of households which undertake agricultural production actually sell their produce, which highlights the subsistence dynamic of the production undertaken (StatsSA, 2002).

2.4 The Agrarian History of South Africa

The inequalities which still persist within the South African economy, primarily along racial lines, sit as a constant reminder of the legacy of the oppressive apartheid regime from which the country has emerged. One of the most prevalent areas where this inequality can be noted is within the agricultural sector. On one hand there are highly capitalised commercial farmers who are engaged in both national and international trade of their commodities and on the other hand a severely underdeveloped and neglected

subsistence agricultural sector which has experienced a precipitous decline in production over the past few decades (Andrew and Fox, 2004).

Bundy (1988) posits that the most significant part of South African social history is the shift of the African people out of a traditional existence where they lived as pastoralists and cultivators through to their inclusion into the formal monetised economy. Their transition was a rapid and disjointed process which involved at its core the exclusion of the African peoples from their primary mode of living, the land, and thrusting them into a dynamic and more advanced commercialised economy. The process of dispossession of their means of producing a living through the land meant it forced the integration into the monetised economy for their very existence. This process of dispossession was initially through conquest and thievery however one of the most decisive blows to the Africans form of livelihoods was the formal introduction of the Natives Land Act of 1913.

The formal move by the colonial government, and followed through later by the apartheid government, was set to solidify the dislocation of the African peoples from their traditional mode of production. The legislation was expanded through various other initiatives over time including the grand design of apartheid and final creation of the Bantustans, which were set up as supposedly „independent states“. The creation of these small independent states, which were too underdeveloped to be economically independent, ensured the suppression of any meaningful economic development and therefore eliminated any alternative to wage labour migration. This guaranteed a constant stream of labour which would have to migrate into South Africa in order to earn the means to live and support their families, who remained in the Bantustans.

Due to a legacy of racial discrimination in the country, there developed a systematic depletion of the livelihood assets and the ability to accumulate any wealth for the black populous was severely reduced. This resulted in further reliance on the formal sector for employment. De Swart (2003) argues that the two major consequences of the racial segregation policy is evident in the high level of racial inequality and the racialised

geography where poverty is concentrated in distant rural areas far from any vibrant economic hubs.

The creation of Bantustans by the apartheid government was designed to socially engineer a constant supply of cheap labour for the mining, manufacturing and farming industries. These homelands were created in line with the demands of the dominant capitalist requirements of the time; for a large reserve army of cheap labour who could be employed at below their productive value and be the catalyst for faster capital accumulation (Legassick and Wolpe, 1976). These regions have become synonymous with overcrowding and high rates of unemployment which is a stark reminder of the legacy of segregation and underdevelopment which still persist (Francis, 2006). The poorly developed local economy, within these areas, is primarily characterised by a heavy reliance on subsistence agriculture and the primary source of incomes for many households is through wage remittances and social grants (du Toit and Neves, 2007).

The historical legacy of segregation and underdevelopment along racial lines is still evident within South Africa 17 years on after the end of apartheid rule. The distinct divisions are evident in many places within South African society however there are few areas where the divide is as pronounced as within the agricultural sector. De Swart (2003) attributes the developments and further polarising of the agricultural sector to three key elements, namely the destruction of rural economies; the long-term depletion of livelihood assets along racial lines and finally, more recently, the increase in unemployment amongst the poor and vulnerable communities.

2.5 Policy Environment

Prior to the disbandment of apartheid there was a significant level of protection within the commercial agricultural sector within South Africa. The policy and institutional framework played a pivotal role in helping to establish the dominance of large scale mechanised farming techniques through out the country. Along with the introduction of democracy in the country the marketing boards and a considerable number of other

distorting policies and institutions were abolished and commodity prices were allowed to fluctuate according to the world price (Vink, 2003). The period of favourable policy and institutional background created a pattern of growth within the South African agricultural system which was far from normal (Van Zyl et.al. 1995).

The farming system is characterised by large mechanised farms with constant returns to scale which are owned and operated by a relatively small number of white individuals. International evidence shows that this ownership structure is at odds with the more efficient small-scale family type models which are especially prevalent in other developing countries (Van Zyl et.al. 1995). Evidence from around the world, and even in Africa, indicates that there is significant merit in adopting small scale agriculture as an engine of economic growth and rural development. These small scale producers have consistently received higher returns to both land and capital over time when compared to their larger counterparts (Ngqangweni, 1999). These findings are, however, in direct contradiction to the finding of Sender and Johnson (2004) who found that in fact small scale agriculture is not significantly more productive or efficient. This was further backed up by McIntosh and Vaughn (1996) who argue that a broad shift towards small scale agriculture within South Africa would be misplaced and inappropriate as small scale farming is only successful on a limited scale and is limited to specific contexts.

Van Zyl et.al. (1995) posits that despite the existence of very real economies of scale benefits which accrue to large scale operations these are, for the most part, only as a result of the distorting policies which still favour the large farms over small farms. The drastic underperformance of small scale farming in the former homelands is due to the historical lack of investment within this sector; with poor infrastructure, lack of access to support services and policies which actively discriminated against their development. Furthermore, land allocations which are too small accompanied by insecure ownership rights to the land mean it is not feasible to run the land productively. These factors in addition to a lack of access to the credit market made any form of meaningful development in these areas very difficult.

For two reasons it is proposed that the labour intensive techniques of small scale farming is preferred to that of capital intensive large farming operations. Firstly the increase in demand for labour will help in the fight against the high level of unemployment in South Africa. Secondly the lower capital requirements for the small scale producers will mean that a larger proportion of the poor will be able to engage in agriculture as the barriers to entry will be reduced. Van Zyl et.al (1995) use their finding of an inverse relationship between farm size and efficiency to promote the idea of land reform where large farms are divided up between numerous beneficiary communities. However despite Van Zyl et.al (1995) findings there has been limited success within the land reform programme to date which has attempted to establish a viable small scale commercial farming base within the country. An explanation put forward by Van Zyl et.al. (1995) for the lack of success in the land reform programme and inability to stimulate a viable small scale sector in general is that the prevailing policy and institutional environment still favours large farming enterprises.

In order to make small scale commercial farming a viable alternative to the current large scale operations there needs to be a proactive approach towards addressing the constraining factors to improve efficiency within the small scale farming industry. Through the improvement of access to credit, information, insurance and reforming the restrictive labour markets the small scale producers will begin to become competitive. The favourable policy and institutional environment needs to be addressed in order to „level the playing field“ (Van Zyl et.al, 1995).

Since the abolition of the marketing boards and a general move by government out of agriculture there has also been a general decline in the public investment in the sector, especially in research and development (Vink, 2003). The concerning factor is that this disinvestment has had a disproportionately negative affect on the small scale producers. The disinvestment has not only affected the research and development but has also resulted in the near total abandonment of government services into these rural areas which has had a greater impact on the smaller producers. Both the research and development of technology and the provision of services to the farming community has

largely been picked up by the private sector, however, due to the larger financial reward and greater ease of dealing with large farmers the small scale producers have largely been excluded from its benefits (Vink, 2003).

The lack of incentive to move out of subsistence production and become a small scale surplus producer, for the reasons highlighted above, has negative consequences for the capacity of agriculture to play a role in development. Unless the focus is to move beyond subsistence into small scale commercial production then poverty and food insecurity will continue to affect certain sectors of the population.

Vink (2003) proposes that the most important determinant in food security within South Africa is ensuring people have „cash in hand“ to enable them to buy food, a sentiment further supported by Palmer and Sender (2006). However, the decrease in demand for low skilled wage labour in favour of mechanisation and higher skilled labour has resulted in a contraction in the formal labour force within South Africa since the late 1980's. This has resulted in many of the rural poor households being disproportionately negatively affected as over one million, primarily low skilled, formal sector jobs have been shed (De Swart 2003). Therefore the ability of a poor household to remain active in agriculture is important as it can provide both a form of income and help improve food security.

2.6 The Development of South Africa's Commercial Farming Sector

The transition to a capitalist mode of production evident today, in the agricultural sector, is an undisputed reality; however, there is a certain amount of disagreement over the exact nature and timing of this transition towards becoming the dominant mode of production. The South African countryside went through a dramatic transformation from its original African pastoralist-cultivators, who were exclusively subsistence oriented and outside of any formal commercial economy, into the capitalist mode dominant today (Bundy, 1988). This division is especially prevalent in Marxist thinking where the division between the structuralists and the social historians has often been played out in a full on frontal attack in both local and international journals (Keegan, 1989; Morris,

1989; Murray, 1989). The main differences between the two schools of thought were to do with the actors of change and the timing of the transition to a capitalist mode of production dominating agriculture (Bradford, 1990).

Firstly the structuralists believed that the transition to a capitalist mode of production was achieved in the 1920's while the historians believed this transition only occurred much later in the 1960's (Keegan, 1989). Secondly the structuralists were of the opinion that the landlords or farmers spearheaded the process of primary accumulation. Farmers owned their own implements and they had to hire in labour to do the work. The social historians on the other hand believed that a capitalist mode of production only became dominant 40 years later and that the primary driver of the change was a sympathetic state. The State began creating an environment which was conducive to capital accumulation through the creation of marketing boards and a protected market environment (Bradford, 1990).

The problem with agriculture is that the rates of return to investment are often below that of other sectors in the economy, such as mining and manufacturing. Irrespective of the actual timing of the transition to capitalist system, the development of commercial agriculture within South Africa was undisputedly aided by the State through preferential policy and institutional arrangements which ensured a protected environment for rapid capital accumulation and development. The protected economic environment within agriculture was, however, restricted to the small number of white owned commercial farmers and black farmers of all sizes were excluded. Linked to this, there was a systematic expropriation of the viable agricultural land, out of black ownership into white hands, which combined to form a significantly underdeveloped and virtually non-existent black commercial farming sector.

2.7 Subsistence Sector

The exact definition of subsistence production is one of some debate. Miracle (2001) asserts that the definition of subsistence is important as the type of classification has a

direct relation to the approach taken to promote development within the sector. There are a range of levels at which a households will engage in subsistence production which will influence the type and level of assistance required. It is difficult and often impossible to distinguish different levels of subsistence producers, therefore, it has become practice to term small farmers who consume their own produce as subsistence producers. Miracle (2001) stresses the importance of not simply placing a blanket definition of subsistence production on all small holder farmers but to ensure that the decisions and case specific dynamics confronted by each farmer be taken into account when planning policy of an intervention.

In this study subsistence production is defined as non-market production, produced primarily for the purpose of household consumption. Households which engage in subsistence agriculture are primarily concerned with establishing a degree of self-sufficiency through the practice of agriculture. The involvement of a household in subsistence living is often not the only means by which to survive however it forms an important supplementary source of nutrition and means of survival (McAlister, 2001).

Small holder agriculture is one of the most important and yet most difficult sectors to effectively develop in any country's development agenda. Central to improving the efficiency of the sector is the ability to understand the prevailing issues which confront small scale agriculture and the resultant decision making patterns which emerge (Miracle, 2001).

The former Bantustans scattered across South Africa are generally considered to be the country's most poor and under-resourced regions. These rural areas are characterised by low economic productivity which is based primarily on a subsistence economy (Ruben et al, 2003). KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and the Eastern Cape have the most pronounced contrasts with well-developed, capital intensive, large scale agricultural industry alongside some of the poorest and most underdeveloped subsistence areas in the country.

The agricultural productivity within the Bantustan regions has been characterised by a steady decline over the course of time. Several studies have shown that there has been a contraction in the area of land under cultivation and in the nature of the cultivation undertaken (du Toit and Neves 2007; De Swart 2003; McAllister 2001; Adey 2007). There has been a considerable contraction away from cultivating fields towards the cultivation of smaller garden plots closer to the homestead. Although this in its self is an interesting fact it is the underlying reasons which deserve closer inspection.

Given the overcrowding and marginal landscape in which many of the former Bantustans are situated it is understandable that there exists the scattered settlement pattern (McAllister, 2001). It makes both ecological and economic sense due to the fact that it takes advantage of the topography and distribution of the natural resources, on which these homesteads are often very reliant, especially in the absence of any formal infrastructure. Fields for cultivation are often situated away from the homesteads, sometimes up to several kilometres away in order to capitalise on the flatter and more fertile soils.

In the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal there are large tracts of land which lie either underutilised or else lie dormant despite there being ample evidence that the land was once cultivated. This fact has attracted much attention from both government and academics alike who are concerned that, despite there being land available, there is very little to show that there is a productive agricultural sector established. On closer inspection there are several reasons for both the initial lack of engagement in agriculture and for the apparent contraction in production within these regions (Francis, 2006).

The lack of any significant agricultural base is due to the historical imbalances developed over time which had a repressive effect on any agricultural development. By the end of Apartheid over 13 million people were confined to 14 % of the country (DAFF 2011). The land was often not suitable for intensive farming practices which resulted in the current situation of overcrowding and a highly degraded natural environment marked by erosion and underproduction (Biggs and Scholes, 2002). The legislated exclusion of

blacks from land ownership in the white farming areas resulted in a highly skewed land ownership structure which resulted in black farmers being bound to the underproductive Bantustans. This resulted in the majority of households becoming heavily reliant on incomes generated through migrant labour (du Toit and Neves, 2007). Policies such as the Hut Tax and later the Natives Land Act of 1913 along with other legislation ensured the need for rural blacks to engage in the formal wage earning economy and prevented them from being totally self-sufficient on subsistent means of production. These policies helped disrupt the agrarian economy of the rural Homelands in order to create a supply of labour for the mines and industry in the main urban centres. This was in direct contrast to the growth of the large scale white commercial farming enterprises which flourished under preferential government policies and subsidies (Andrew and Fox, 2004).

The subsequent lack of economic activity is linked to the significant under investment in the region and has perpetuated a relationship of dependency on other regions and economies. du Toit and Neves (2007) argue that the persistence of poverty in the rural areas is kept in place by four interconnected forces. Firstly the decades of underinvestment in infrastructure and agriculture accompanied by deagrarianisation has led to the gradual collapse of the local agrarian production. Secondly the decline of remittances to rural areas due to the falling demand for unskilled labour has resulted in declining wealth in the rural areas constraining the productive capacity of the inhabitants. Thirdly a process termed „rural densification“ as people migrate into the smaller rural town as migration to the large urban centres has become less certain, this results in densely populated areas with little to offer in the way of employment. Finally the effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic as the working age population is negatively affected resulting in financial stress being placed on the children and elderly.

Despite there being a high concentration of youth amongst the rural communities there seems to be a lack of involvement by them in agriculture. Palmer and Sender (2006) posit that this lack of involvement is due partly because this age group is rather involved in other household activities such as fetching water and firewood while the older members are engaged in the agricultural activities. However Altman et.al (2009) refute the

perception that youth are not involved in agriculture as their findings show that contrary to popular belief small scale agriculture is dominated by people in their youth.

2.8 From the Field to the Garden Plot

The decrease in field cultivation across most of the households in the former Bantustans is a well-documented phenomenon and it has been mirrored by a dramatic increase in the number of garden plots being cultivated (McAllister, 2001). There is no one single factor which has driven the shift in agricultural production but rather it has been a combination of a multitude of factors and their complex interrelationships.

Many households in the rural areas have suffered from a decreasing availability to access resources which have had a negative impact on the productive potential of that particular household (Boonzaaier, 2009). With restricted or shrinking access to inputs the obvious solution has been to consolidate production away from large fields towards small garden plots adjacent the home. One of the most important resources which have seen a dramatic reduction of availability over time has been that of formal employment remittances. The declining demand for „unskilled“ wage labour has fallen, even since the end of apartheid by approximately one million jobs (Adey, 2007).

There is a direct correlation between the deepening of poverty and the decreasing ability of a household to engage in some sort of agricultural activity. In a study conducted by McAllister (2001) there was a direct correlation between the productivity of a household and its access to both a source of income and a store of wealth. The area of land cultivated and the availability of an external source of income is positively correlated. The link between the numbers of large livestock¹, which is a store of wealth, and the size of the area cultivated by a homestead is also positively correlated. This is linked to the fact that although the total number of large livestock in the rural areas had remained relatively constant the ownership had become considerably more concentrated, with more than a third of all households not owning any large livestock (McAllister, 2001).

¹ Large livestock include sheep, goats, cattle and horses.

A direct consequence of the falling incomes is the decrease in funding available for investment into inputs such as fertilizer resulting in reduced or failed crop yields. A common reason cited for the abandoning of a field in favour of garden plots is the reduced fertility of the soil in the field, however, there is seldom any replenishing of the nutrients in the soil of the fields as it is too costly. The garden plots on the other hand are smaller and able to be fertilized with the manure from the kraal² at minimal cost. It is common practice to have the garden built on the site of an old kraal in order to capitalise on the nutrient rich deposits in the soil (McAllister, 2001).

At first glance it may seem that due to the high number of unemployed people within these rural areas that there would be ample labour to work the fields however labour constraints are often cited as a constraining factor to production. The gradual breaking down of social norms and practices can be clearly seen in the decrease in prevalence of work parties. The communal practice of gathering together in work parties, normally to help an individual member with the manual labour associated with managing their field, such as weeding, has steadily declined. One reason cited is the fact that certain households have become wealthy enough to become independent of the work parties which undermines the whole structure of the arrangement (du Toit and Neves, 2007). Therefore households prefer smaller garden plots which are more manageable for the members of the household and there is less reliance on the work parties and the community at large to help with production.

Coupled with the decline in manual labour and the drop in large livestock ownership, there has been a precipitous decline in the availability of draft animals for ploughing. Oxen are no longer trained to work in the fields as those who can afford to own livestock usually also have the means to hire or own machinery to do the physical work such as ploughing (Andrew and Fox, 2004). The problem is that very few households can afford to either own or even rent a tractor to help with the cultivating of their lands or help with weeding therefore there is even a widening gap of inequality within the rural areas.

² Kraal: livestock enclosure

A traditional source of labour, which has seen a sharp decline over the past few decades, is that of children. The decrease in children's involvement has had two interesting knock on effects to the agricultural sector in rural areas. Firstly McAllister (2001) cites a shift in the staple crop produced by the majority of households from sorghum to maize. The reason being that without children to watch over the sorghum crop in the field there was a high incidence of loss to birds, however, because maize is in a sheath it is protected from the birds. Secondly there is an increased need for fences around fields due to the fact that without children to watch over the livestock, crop loss or damage is a common occurrence. The cost of installing a fence is often prohibitively high around an entire field and so there is a shift to garden plots where the crops can be monitored more carefully due to its close proximity to the homestead.

As a result of centuries of monetisation of the rural economies through wage remittances and more recently social grants the dependence of the rural economies on the formal economy means that it cannot be classified as purely agrarian in nature (McAllister, 2001). This means that although households use subsistence production as a means to support and sustain a certain level of living it is more supplementary in nature rather than the self-sustaining and independent subsistence living (Collinson et al, 2003).

2.9 Gardening: A Good Alternative

For all the reasons cited above it is understandable that there has been a decline in the number and size of fields being cultivated however there are also some substantial benefits to farming a garden plot which have risen in prominence in these areas. Garden plots are preferable over a larger field due to the fact that there are considerably fewer inputs required in the production process. There is considerable savings on inputs such as fertilizer due to the fact that the area is smaller and that most of the fertilizer requirements are met through the application of livestock manure. The garden plots are usually fenced with a mesh of sticks and debris which would be impractical around a large field and so there is a considerable saving on fencing and as mentioned earlier due to the close proximity to the homestead there is actually less need for fencing.

Another considerable saving, due to the closer proximity to the homestead, is the substantial time saved by not having to travel out to the distant field for work. Palmer and Sender (2006) refer to the problem of „time poverty“ where rural households are often restricted in their productivity due to the lack of mobility of the household members and the demanding nature of performing relatively mundane tasks, such as walking long distances to tend to a field. Furthermore, due to both the smaller area and different technique of cultivation there is less time required in weeding and general plot maintenance. The change in cultivation technique between fields and garden plots has been a shift away from mono-cropping, particularly maize, towards a more diverse set of crops, especially vegetables (du Toit and Neves, 2007). Although the overall time spent managing the crops may have decreased the intensity of the farming methods have increased, intercropping is common practice and the plot is not all planted at once like the field. Planting is staggered over several weeks to ensure that there is a more constant supply of green miellies and vegetables for consumption over the harvest period and it is also a risk aversion strategy in case of variations in weather conditions. Another benefit of intercropping is the reduced weeding necessary, due to the fact that the subsidiary crops, usually vegetables, are planted in between the main crop which outcompete the weeds. There is a direct correlation between the number of hours spent weeding and the yield of the crop therefore if the need for weeding is reduced there should be higher yields (McAllister, 2001).

In a study done by McAllister (2001) in the rural Eastern Cape it is found that although there is often a considerable decrease in the total area under cultivation per household the yield per hectare often increases dramatically from the garden plots over the field. This occurrence is largely due to the increased ability of households to carefully manage their garden plots.

2.10 Government Plan

The New Growth Path instituted as a policy directive over the medium term for the country seems to highlight agricultural value chains as a driving force in employment creation within the economy. The expectation is that through the stimulation of smallholder schemes, within the agricultural value chain, over 300 000 households will benefit and 144 000 people will be employed in agro-processing jobs by 2020 (NPC, 2010). The problem with the Government's assessment of how to deal with the issues of high unemployment and low levels of rural economic activity is that the solutions are still primarily based on the notion of trickle-down economics as highlighted earlier.

Since the end of apartheid in the early 90's there have been several projects and policies which have set out to develop the rural areas through some kind of agrarian development scheme. The emphasis has usually been primarily based on stimulating the development of a „commercial farming class“. The problem with attempting to stimulate a commercial dynamic within these rural areas is that even if it did work it would still not provide the level of development necessary to benefit the majority of the rural poor (Lyne and Ortmann, 1996). Commercial agriculture still plays an important part in the South African context both in its contribution to the economy and in providing food security; however, it is not an appropriate path for broad scale development and poverty alleviation in the rural areas. McAllister (2001) argues that a more equitable and viable option is only possible if there is a more broad scale inclusion of subsistence producers into the development agenda. However, one thing is abundantly clear and that is the vast majority of the rural poor are not going to be lifted out of their current state by simply relying on the market forces alone.

While there has been a general decline in the level of employment and an increase in levels of poverty these have been partly offset by an increase in the provision of basic services to the rural areas. Despite the fact that there are still severe shortfalls in the roll out of adequate infrastructure and services to the rural communities there has

nevertheless been a considerable increase in the access to basic services such as healthcare, electrification and water, when compared to before the democratic transition.

There is little evidence to suggest that there is going to be a diversification of the rural economy, away from a reliance on subsistence and a dependence on the formal economy, as has been witnessed in other parts of the world (McAllister, 2001). The structure of the rural economy has changed little over time as the reliance on remittance wages has existed for several generations, if anything there has simply been an increase in unemployment as the demand for „unskilled“ labour shrinks in favour of mechanisation. The one change in income source which has played an ever increasing role in the rural areas is the inflow of social grants which have been rolled out by the government since the inception of democracy.

The New Growth Path does acknowledge the importance of improving access to several key inputs which have historically constrained any meaningful development by small scale farmers. There is a need for improved access to quality infrastructure and appropriate services, to provide production incentives, greater price stability, access to important agricultural inputs and finally access to markets. However what the document fails to point out is how it will deal with the insecurity of tenure which is often cited as a severe disincentive towards engagement in agriculture within the rural areas. The issue of communally owned land as a viable option for agriculture is disputed by the likes of Lyne and Darroch (2003) who point out that due to the forced rider and free rider effects these investments are notoriously difficult to productively manage.

2.11 Land Reform

One of the major issues which Cousins (2009) raises is the fact that although there are clearly disparities in the land ownership and mode of agriculture within the country, often there is no easy way to reverse this process. The current situation has reached a new sort of equilibrium where the injustices of the past have become so entrenched that the new status quo is accepted as the norm. Despite the issue of land reform receiving a

considerable amount of lip service from politicians and bureaucrats the progress in transforming the skewed distribution of land ownership in South Africa has been lacklustre (Lahiff, 2007).

At the transition to democracy the racially skewed ownership of land was identified as an issue which required active participation on the behalf of government in order to achieve a more equitable land holding scenario. The basic theoretical foundation upon which the interventionist approach is founded is called a multiple equilibria theory. The theory posits that there is not simply one combination of demand and supply at which the market clears but rather there is a multitude of different points of equilibrium (Basu, 2003). This allows the justification for a government to forcefully manipulate the market, either via legislation or other forms of coercion, towards a new, more suitable equilibrium point. After this, even if the policies and legislation were removed, then the market would not return to its previous equilibrium but would remain at the new point. However an important point to note is the context in which the market is operating, if the equilibrium point is as a result of external forces, such as globalisation, then the market may not find a new equilibrium at the new point but it will shift back to its original point, which is the world equilibrium, after the removal of the legislation (Basu, 2003).

The concept of multiple equilibria is relevant to the agricultural situation within South Africa for two reasons. Firstly it might be grounds for the direct intervention of government in the redistribution of land and in the whole structure of the agricultural system of the country. If they can shift the point at which the market clears to a new production point, where produce is no longer reliant upon large scale farming techniques but rather where small scale producers are the dominant mode of production, then there is hope for a redistribution programme to be an engine of economic growth and a means to reduce poverty. However the second point is the direct opposite, if the government intervenes in the agricultural sector and the market does not clear at the new market point then there might be significant damage to the development agenda of the country and to the economy as a whole.

At the advent of democracy in 1994 there was the option of radically changing the fundamental structure of the agricultural system within the country through a large scale redistribution of the productive agricultural land. However a more conservative and gradual approach was opted for. The decision to follow a market based approach where the government would facilitate the transfer of land and even play an active part in the purchasing of land, all at market prices, was promoted by institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF (Cousins and Scoones, 2010).

The success to date of the whole land reform programme is not easily quantifiable however the results so far have fallen short of their targets. The initial figure of 30% of the arable land in South Africa had to be redistributed into black ownership, within 5 years, was laid out for redistribution in the RDP in 1994 (Lahiff, 2007). However it soon became clear this would not succeed and so the target date was pushed back. There have been numerous reasons cited for the slow pace of land transactions changing hands; two of the most common reasons cited are: a lack of funds in the relevant government departments and an excess of „red tape“, farmers prefer to do private transactions as the land reform process is arduous. To date there has only been about 7.4 million hectares transferred under the redistribution programme, which converts to about a 9% of the agricultural land or a third of the target (DAFF, 2010). The slow rate at which the land redistribution process has gone has increased calls from the left to initiate a more swift form of redistribution by removing the willing seller willing buyer condition and having more directed intervention from the state (Lahiff, 2007).

A fact in favour of the willing buyer willing seller argument, highlighted in a study conducted by Lyne and Darroch (2003), is that non-government market transactions of land ownership from white to black owners have been significantly more efficient and the land has been of considerably better quality than those conducted within the government led programmes. The findings were reinforced a few years later in a study by Lyne and Ferrer (2006) where the same results came to the fore. If the government included the private market transactions into their statistics of percentage land ownership along racial lines the statistics of transformation would be significantly better.

Palmer and Sender (2006) assert that basing the premise of land reform on the assumption that the new owners will use the land in an economically productive manner is flawed. This is because, in their study, they found that there is evidence to show that the desire to own more land amongst the rural populous is primarily based on the merit of owning land as a place to live and it is not an expression of interest to expand household or individual agricultural productivity. This has been pointed to as one of the major downfalls of the land redistribution programme which has resulted in numerous productive commercial farms becoming an extension of the former homelands which are characterised by low agricultural productivity and a scattered settlement pattern.

2.12 Communal Ownership of Land

Through the land reform initiative the Government had hopes to stimulate viable commercial small holder farmers to take over large commercial enterprises and run these at a considerably smaller scale. Under a programme called Settlement Land Acquisition Grant (SLAG), the government attempted to promote the inclusion of the poor into the redistribution process through a conditional cash grant (DOA, 2004). However a study by Lyne and Ferrer, (2006) found that the amount was too little to buy a large enough plot of land and the beneficiaries were too poor to access credit; they had to resort to pooling their funds with other beneficiaries in order to be able to afford the land. The immediate reduction on productivity on the farmland which has been transferred is testament to the fact that there were significant obstacles preventing the success of the new beneficiaries.

The results of communal land ownership have been characterised by too many beneficiaries on a single plot of land to allow any of them to become economically sustainable farmers (Lyne and Darroch 2003). The results of too many people is the free rider and forced rider problems, where in the end no one wants to invest any effort or capital into the land as they will not reap the full rewards. Sender and Johnson (2004) found in a study in the Western Cape that there was a direct correlation between the productivity of a farm and its size. Furthermore, according to Mafeje (2003), communal

ownership of land is the wrong form of ownership structure to use within the African culture where ownership is of a different nature. Due to the cultural and historical norms which have been instilled within the African culture, livelihoods are more about a corporate existence and not as an individual. Mafeje (2003) goes further to state that the relation to the land is primarily about domination and social relations within the community rather than being based solely on production.

The hope that land redistribution might cause a mini agricultural revolution as small growers would begin to flourish and succeed as a sustainable form of production within the country has not materialised. Even the hope that the shift might stimulate economic growth and employment has not happened. Sender and Johnson (2004) show that even as the mode of production shifts towards small scale production, the level of employment does not necessarily increase.

One of the possible reasons for the failure of many small scale farms might be the biased nature of the existing agricultural system, where large producers are favoured over small scale producers. This bias exists at several different levels within the market starting from policy biases, access to credit, marketing capability, purchasing power and economies of scale, access to markets through to issues of production specifications such as phyto-sanitary regulations. One possible way around the constraints is through the formation of co-operatives where the small producers use their combined bargaining power to achieve the same benefits as a large scale producer.

One of the cost advantages of small scale „family farms“ is the cost advantage of not having to rely on hired labour, which is supposed to outweigh the shortcomings experienced from lack of size, which can be compensated for through the formation of co-operatives (Sender and Johnson, 2004). However the poor results of small scale farms and the failure of many to launch into any meaningful commercial production do not seem to support this argument. Certain structural constraints have been identified and Government has initiated several programmes to try and help small emerging farmers overcome these barriers to entry (Lahiff, 2007). These include:

- Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme – CASP
 - Micro-Agricultural Finance Scheme – MAFISA
 - Equity Share Scheme – ESS
- And more recently,
- Comprehensive Rural Development Programme – CRDP
 - Improving the extension services to rural communities

An often cited constraint for successful commercial farming is the issue of land ownership, there is divided opinion as to the optimal structure for land ownership rights. Lyne and Darroch (2003) posit that without secure tenure of ownership and the ability to enforce exclusion of others from the land there is little chance of success due to the free rider effect which will prevent any investment in the land. Mafeje (2003), on the other hand, states that the imposition of Eurocentric ideologies of land ownership are destined to failure as this form of land ownership is not in sync with the cultural norms of the African people.

Binswanger and Deininger (1997) assert the importance of communal land, despite its shortfalls for promoting investment, lies in the fact that it provides a back stop against absolute destitution for many of the rural poor. Especially in cases where hardship, such as drought or family death can lead to a distress sale of assets, especially land, which then leaves the individual or family in absolute impoverishment. Furthermore, in an environment where information costs are high and markets are imperfect, private property is not necessarily the most efficient form of farming. Binswanger and Deininger (1997) claim that a system of private property only becomes superior to a communal ownership system once population growth and specialisation increases the value of land.

The range of problems cited for a failure of land reform programmes range from inefficient State institutions, inappropriate selection of beneficiaries, budgetary constraints, inappropriate legislation and excessive red tape (Lahiff, 2007). The problem which continues to develop is that there are an increasing number of previously

productive farms becoming unproductive/ underproductive. This not only causes a reduction in GDP but more importantly places greater pressure on national food security.

“Ongoing failure to define clearly the intended beneficiaries of land reform, the lack of specific poverty alleviation strategy, an emphasis on economic „viability“ and the chronic failure to monitor the programme suggests that this exclusion of poor and marginalised groups is likely to continue.” (Lahiff 2007, 1588)

2.13 Sustainable Livelihoods

A sound agricultural system is one of the most important fundamentals of a developing society in order to ensure that most of the basic needs of humanity are met. Agriculture forms the livelihoods of billions of people worldwide, ranging from the employees of large multinational corporations involved in the value chain through to small scale subsistence farmers. Modern agriculture has many benefits, however, there is also a significant down side to certain aspects of agriculture. The pressure of having to continually improve the productive capacity of the sector in order to keep abreast with the exploding population growth rate often has detrimental affects, not the least of which is on the environment. The effects of over extending the environment to try and continually attain better yields without taking the natural limitations and requirements of the surrounding environment into consideration can often have seriously detrimental consequences. The price of these consequences is not always borne by those who create the problems but are either passed on to others or else society as a whole carries the burden (Purvis and Smith, 2006).

The negative consequences of agricultural mismanagement are readily apparent in the lives of many of the rural poor, who suffer an increase in insecurity, throughout the world. It has become increasingly important for agriculture to revive its role in environmental preservation and stewardship or else the livelihoods of those reliant on agriculture will be jeopardised. There needs to be a shift away from a focus on short term

benefit towards that of long term sustainability; therefore, both the long term prospects of food security and the long term livelihoods of the rural producers is enhanced (Purvis and Smith, 2006).

Worldwide, the rural poor survive by piecing together a combination of various different forms of income and livelihood strategies; the worst off of these is the landless rural poor. It is estimated that globally over 168 million rural households have little to no access to land. Most of these people have very little means by which to make a living and as a result they suffer significant livelihood uncertainty and suffer food insecurity (Purvis and Smith, 2006).

“A small peasant and landless labourer may both be poor, but their fortunes are not tied together. In understanding the proneness to starvation of either we have to view them not as members of the huge army of the “poor”, but as members of particular occupational groups, having different endowments, being governed by rather different entitlement relations.” (Sen, 1981: 156).

The way in which poverty is measured informs how poverty will be confronted. In order to be able to make a significant difference in the lives of the poor it is important to recognise the specific context and form of entitlement deficiencies which impact on their livelihoods. Sen argues that the individual’s ability to command any commodity, including money, is directly dependent on their entitlement relations. The entitlements of an individual include an array of facets which form a more holistic approach to deprivation and poverty than simply a money metric approach. As Sen says “starting the story with a shortage of income is to leave the story half told” (Sen, 1981: 156). The benefit of assessing more than simply an individual’s income allows for a more complete account of the individual’s ability to exert control over certain commodities, specifically food. In a situation such as within the rural areas of South Africa, where formal employment is rare, income may be significantly lower than an individual’s actual capabilities are.

The notion of sustainable rural livelihoods has increasingly entered into the discourse around the debate of rural development, poverty alleviation and environmental management (Scoones, 2005). Sustainable livelihoods is a multifaceted approach towards analysing the various aspects which affect the ways in which either an individual, household, village, region or even entire nation carry out their lives and in what way they can be improved towards a more long run sustainable state. The sustainable livelihoods framework analyses three main factors which influence any livelihood strategy: Firstly the context, secondly the available resources and finally the nature of the prevailing institutional processes and organisations. These three factors influence the types of livelihood strategies undertaken and the types of outcomes which can be expected for various livelihood paths (Scoones, 2005).

The need to understand the way these three factors interlink and how they play a part in determining rural livelihoods is an important aspect towards developing a sustainable livelihood strategy into the future (Siegel, 2005). The contextual conditions and trends which persist at various levels have a direct influence on the institutional structure and resource endowments and visa versa. The contextual background of South Africa, taking the historical affects of apartheid into account, has played a particularly important role in the current livelihood strategies of the millions of rural people in the former homelands throughout the country. The context of apartheid has influenced the type of resources available to the rural poor and the type of institutions and organisations which currently exist within these underdeveloped areas.

According to Scoones (2005) there are 4 main types of resources which an individual can draw from, namely: Natural capital, financial capital, human capital and social capital. These asset bases usually form the foundation upon which a livelihood strategy is constructed in accordance to the size of the endowments and the productive capabilities of the assets. Natural capital, human capital and social capital are of particular importance within the rural context where there is usually a dearth of financial assets to draw upon. Siegel (2005) asserts that assets are the „drivers“ of long term sustainable growth and poverty alleviation in rural areas. Siegel goes further to state that the poor are

not only asset-poor but are also unable to fully exploit their available assets, especially in rural areas where there is a lack of adequate supporting institutions and infrastructure.

The institutional and organisational structures which exist at various levels, ranging from household to national and even international levels, have a profound impact on people's ability to pursue a sustainable livelihood. It is these institutional arrangements which form the binding between the social structures and the ability of individuals to pursue a sustainable livelihood. These institutions and organisations may be both formal and informal and are often subject to embedded power relations from various actors. These social relations are an integral part of any society and are often dynamic and continually changing over time. It is important for any development initiative to take cognisance of these social arrangements when initiating any form of rural development initiative (Scoones, 2005).

An important aspect of the sustainable livelihoods approach towards planning a development initiative is the fact that there is a more holistic approach by ensuring an integrated analysis of as many of the influencing factors as possible. This helps design a more well-targeted intervention which develops on the current strengths already in existence. A sustainable livelihoods framework should be used to ensure that the development initiative is focused towards the comparative advantages of a region and works on a case specific basis as opposed to a „one size fits all“ approach (Siegel, 2005).

May (1996, 19) identifies four categories in existence within the rural areas of South Africa which form the basis of livelihood generating activities for the poor. These four strategies are not mutually exclusive but rather households usually have a combination of different methods of making a living.

1. Wage labour (both formal and informal employment)
2. Social grants
3. Wage remittances
4. Agricultural and non-farm petty commodity production

Diversification of household income sources is an important method of risk reduction and is an important buffer against temporary shocks to a household's income source. It is common for each member of a household to engage in a different income generating activity in order to have as many different income sources as possible. For example the women engage in agriculture while the men seek wage labour and while the youth are hawking or begging. The lives of the rural poor are of particular importance within the sustainable livelihoods framework due to the high level of dependence of the natural environment as an important source of livelihood. In order to manage the environment properly there needs to be a holistic plan of ensuring the usage by the rural communities does not exceed the natural rate of restoration.

Scoones (2005) identified three possible strategies for the rural poor to improve their livelihoods, namely: agricultural intensification/extensification, livelihood diversification and migration. The possible strategy undertaken to improve a particular individual's livelihood may be a combination of various strategies where some may become highly specialised while others diversify across a range of strategies forming a „livelihood portfolio“ (Scoones, 2005). An aspect which often forms an important part of the considerations as to how an individual or household will compile its livelihood portfolio is the considerations of stresses and shocks. A sustainable livelihood needs to be able to endure stresses and cope with shocks on a long term sustainable basis.

The three main sources for a household to access food are through market transactions, subsistence production and transfers from government programmes and other households. In a study by Baiphethi and Jacobs (2009), they revealed that there is an increasing trend towards the reliance on market transactions for households to acquire their food requirements. Rural households are increasingly looking away from subsistence production towards other monetary forms of income so that food can be bought, mitigating the need to produce. However the importance of subsistence and small scale farming in providing food security and a back stop against destitution for many rural households is still relevant. The improved production on small scale and subsistence

farms is important with a backdrop of high unemployment, inflation and poverty still widespread in the rural areas.

Subsistence agriculture is seldom the only source of food for the homestead but, rather, it usually forms a supplementary supply of food to that bought in the market. The expansion of the social grant system within South Africa has had a significantly positive impact on reducing in the incidence of hunger in the country; however, the problem of under-nutrition is still a persistent concern within many of the poorest homes (Altman et.al 2009). The additional food produced allows the release of cash, which would have been spent on food, to be available for other household expenditure. Furthermore, the food is often stored for times of distress, such as when the primary income earner is temporarily unable to earn an income. There is a significant fluctuation in both the number and the extent to which households will engage in agriculture from year to year. Altman et.al (2009) noted that rural households increase or decrease their production or else moving into and out of agriculture entirely from season to season. Furthermore, Altman et.al (2009) suggest that this is indicative of the fact that agriculture is seen as a residual activity which a household will use when it suits them otherwise they will either reduce or abandon production if it is inconvenient or not needed.

The importance of large local trading centres and supermarkets in the provisioning of food to remote rural areas has been well documented in several developing countries. The rural areas of South Africa is no different, with the prevalence of the four large supermarket chains providing an ever increasing network of stores, servicing the rural populace. People travel form considerable distances to do their monthly or bi-monthly shopping in these centres as opposed to simply buying their wares form the local „Spaza“ shop for two reasons. Firstly the average price of goods is considerably cheaper in the large Supermarket stores as opposed to the local spaza“s due to economies of size and highly efficient: retail logistics, procurement methods, distribution channels and inventory management techniques. Secondly there is a greater selection of products in the large supermarkets which are unavailable in the small spaza shops (D‘Haese and Van Huylenbroeck, 2005).

D'Haese and Van Huylenbroeck (2005) found in their study that the household income of those households who did the majority of their shopping in large supermarkets had higher average incomes than those that did their shopping primarily at the local spaza shop. Furthermore, those who shopped at supermarkets were more likely to partake in garden cultivation than those who did not shop at supermarkets. This goes to show that households with greater income sources are more likely to be able to overcome the capital constraints of cultivation. This supports the findings of Palmer and Sender (2006) who found that those classified as „very poor“ were less likely to be engaged in agriculture than those who were simply „poor“.

The low productivity in the subsistence farming sector along with increasingly degraded lands are often cited as primary reasons why households are abandoning cultivation (Baiphethi and Jacobs, 2009). The much anticipated and hoped for, green revolution is yet to materialise in Africa. In order to promote and encourage further cultivation and production in the rural areas of South Africa and Africa at large there needs to be a significant improvement in the level and quality of input packages offered to those who are farming. In order to overcome the barriers to successful production, farmers need target specific and region specific packages which have the appropriate technologies and inputs which will improve the returns to labour in the specific focus area.

The Government needs to not only invest in improved inputs but also in promoting the efficient use of the inputs such as fertiliser, organic inputs and water and soil conserving technologies (Agwe, 2007). The promotion of efficient input use is important in ensuring the long term sustainable intensification of subsistence agricultural production. As the productivity of arable land increases, the pressure on the marginal lands will decrease as cultivation is no longer needed on an extensive scale but rather improving the quality of intensive farming practices.

Incremental changes in knowledge and inputs can have a significant impact on the productivity of a specific farm or land. The quality and quantity of input technology and

extension services offered to subsistence producers must be accessible and user friendly in order to promote buy in and participation. Rural development must be a holistic approach where agriculture is not targeted in isolation but is targeted as a part of a larger development plan. The improvement of health facilities, basic services such as water and sanitation, schooling, land management and access to markets are all important in the overall development of the rural areas. The World Bank asserts that in order to improve the productivity and sustainability of small scale and subsistence farming, some of the most important areas to focus on is the improvement of price incentives, increase access to markets (both input and output markets) and to promote the innovation of new technology (Baiphethi and Jacobs, 2009).

2.14 Women

The role of women in unpaid labour within the homestead had a steady increase in the rural areas as the demand for migrant labourers increased in South Africa in the late 1800's and early 1900's, where able bodied men left these areas in search of formal employment. The result was an increase in demand being placed on women to perform the greater part of the agricultural labour along with the household tasks and non-farm income generating activities. However, the continued prevalence of high levels of unemployment and poverty, which persist within the rural areas of South Africa, bear testament to the fact that the migrant labour system is not an adequate, long-term, form of livelihood (Ngqaleni and Mkhura, 1996).

A combination of both the cultural norms of African societies and apartheid policies has resulted in women being highly discriminated against. Due to the significance of women in subsistence agriculture in the rural areas, any development initiative which fails to address the disparities and discrimination of women in these areas will have marginal success. Ngqaleni and Mkhura (1996) attribute the failure of several agricultural development initiatives to the lack of inclusion of women in the project design and the failure to account for the power relations of women and men. One of the major constraints to the success of women in agriculture is the lack of ability to independently

own or have access to land for cultivation. They go further to claim that the lack of progress in the agricultural development in Africa could be partly explained by the marginalisation of women in the agricultural development.

Ngqaleni and Mkhura (1996) make reference to the fact that it has been proven that women are significantly more likely to make family basic needs a priority over other forms of consumption while men are more inclined to spend available income on unproductive consumption expenditure. Thus it is argued, improving women's disposable incomes will have a greater positive impact for development. Due to the direct involvement of women in agriculture it would therefore have a direct positive impact on their earning capacity if rural agriculture was moved beyond subsistence production into a commercial, income generating, activity.

Despite the fact that subsistence productivity and returns to labour are relatively low, women often insist that they would rather persevere with cultivation than seek formal wage employment. Baiphethi and Jacobs (2009) list three possible reasons for this tendency. Firstly, the food which they produce is a form of income which is less easily extrapolated by others, in the household, as opposed to cash. Secondly, the woman may still have access to cash if she starts up a small business by selling either fresh produce or else prepared food. Finally, farming falls within the expected role and responsibility of women within the household.

Ngqaleni and Mkhura (1996) cite four major constraints which face women within the rural South African context which hinders their development in agriculture and in a more broad sense. Firstly, the constraints on land ownership and the usufruct rights of land and other working assets are more constrained for women than for men, which restricts the access to collateral and credit. Secondly, women carry a disproportionate share of the domestic responsibilities of the household which restricts their time available for productive labour. Thirdly, cultural norms and barriers may prevent women from certain tasks or from interacting with male extension officers. These norms may also under represent women in community organisations as they have a low social status, therefore,

are not given equal opportunity. Finally, under the Bantu education system women were actively discouraged from attending school, moreover, as a result of the significant underinvestment in the rural educational system by the apartheid government, illiteracy and poor education results in low labour productivity.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

According to Murray (2002) all livelihoods research conducted should incorporate both a circumspective approach and a retrospective approach to ensure a more holistic understanding of the factors affecting a specific livelihood strategy. Murray (2002) concedes that there is significant importance in a longitudinal research methodology however he identifies “micro-level investigations as essential” (Murray, 2002: 1) especially when used in conjunction with established methods. It is however important to outline the case specific setting by defining the historical, structural and institutional foundations of macro-context (Murray, 2002).

This dissertation will be based on a case study of a rural community which will attempt to include both retrospective and circumspective approaches towards data collection around subsistence agriculture. The critical question of this study is to try and assess the various dynamics which affect the subsistence agricultural production within the selected community. Although the results will be revealing of the specific set of issues facing the subsistence agricultural sector within the local area hopefully it will also reveal the structural causes affecting the subsistence sector within South Africa as a whole. The results for this study were gathered primarily through personal interviews and personal observations within the area of study. No specific timeframe was added to the questionnaire for the retrospective change over time as the study was more intent on analysing the perceived changes over time as opposed to the exact changes, which would be difficult to quantify with the proposed method of analysis.

Drawing from previous research in subsistence agriculture the study intended to go some way towards revealing the underlying trends and the primary drivers behind the perceived shift in agricultural productivity in the specific locality. The key questions were based around establishing the following:

- What has been the character and trends of subsistence agriculture in selected households within a specific locality over time;

- What factors have influenced these trends?
- What has been the interaction of selected households, and perceptions and experiences of selected household members, with regard to subsistence crop production activities;
- In what way does subsistence production support sustainable livelihoods of households? Do households with limited profiles of subsistence agriculture face more livelihood challenges than those with more extensive production activities?
- What are the driving forces behind the changes in the agricultural production landscape within the rural areas and more generally, how this has affected the livelihoods of those living in the rural areas, including historical context and
- How does the current subsistence agricultural situation and context fit into a Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) of development and can the SLA be used to formulate and promote a path for future growth and development of the sector?

One of the major challenges facing any sort of research which attempts to analyse the dynamics of change over time is the availability of past records. An additional challenge confronting a research on agriculture within the rural homelands of South Africa is the lack of formal land rights and lack of formal record keeping. Therefore the study focused less on the binary of an increase or decrease in agricultural productivity but rather focused on the shifts in societal perceptions around subsistence agriculture and attempted to cast some light on the complexity of the driving forces behind changes in these rural areas. The choice of data collection was to use personal interviews and collect qualitative responses with which to compile a general understanding of the various dynamics at play within the context of the study area. The questions which were selected were meant to shed some light and add further to the insights of the dynamics affecting the study community.

1. The various perspectives of the different community level and household level actors around subsistence agriculture need to be taken into account in order to understand the historic and current levels of household production.

2. Establish how household, community and other relevant stakeholders perceive the spectrum of agricultural production in the study area and how this relates to their livelihood strategies.
3. Compare and contrast both the intra- and inter- household approaches to subsistence production.
4. It is important to understand the different factors that local actors feel contribute to the trends in the type of subsistence agricultural approaches undertaken and how these compare to various descriptions in other studies, policy frameworks and models.

As noted by Berhanu et al (2003) that when undertaking research in rural areas there are various protocols and steps to go through in order to ensure the attainment of good quality data. One of the most important aspects in research of this type is the identification of good informants who are well informed and willing to talk about the subject being studied. An important aspect in dealing with informants from rural communities is to show respect and an understanding for the cultures and traditions of the area and people, this helps facilitate a smooth interaction between the respondents and the researcher. The cooperation of farmers should not be taken for granted and especially in the initial phases of the interview design there should be a degree of flexibility which can be integrated into the research design during the field work (Berhanu, 2003).

Although this study did not follow, exactly, the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach; the methodology employed drew from some of the critical reflections of relevance included in this approach; as they fed well into the framework used in the study. Chambers (1995) emphasises the importance of decentralisation and empowerment as central thrusts of the PRA framework. This is useful in the light of how the rural poor in this instance exert control over their own lives and modes of livelihood. One of the tools which were borrowed from the PRA was that of mapping, allowing participants to engage in a more practical level with the research. Although the idea of mapping promoted by Chambers was not followed exactly, respondents were encouraged to actively partake in pointing out distant fields and walking through their gardens talking

about their produce and the various aspects of their specific agrarian environment. This technique revealed a rich descriptive element to the interview and allowed the respondents to participate in a more meaningful way. The method allowed a more informal approach to be adopted which also put the respondents more at ease. The technique added to the analysis by allowing the respondents to talk more freely about the general issues surrounding their livelihoods and also prompted answers which may have been forgotten or overlooked as they were able to interact with the subject they were addressing, for example their garden.

Berhanu (2003) makes reference to the fact that the more homogenous a group is the smaller the required sample size is. For the purpose of this study there was no easy answer as to the desired number of respondents in order to make the study robust. The study needed to be large enough to convey some of the most important perceptions about change and the driving forces behind it affecting, not only the individual household but also the local community at large. Therefore taking into account the constraints of time and money and weighing up the need for a robust study, 12 respondents from 12 randomly selected households were interviewed with a further 4 purposefully selected interviews with relevant role-players were conducted for the case study. The study was comprised of several trips into the study area where in-depth interviews were conducted in the 12 randomly selected households (See Appendix)³. The 4 purposive interviews were conducted with the local traditional leader, the local extension officer, a deputy manager within the provincial Department of Agriculture and the Ingwe municipal mayor.

The 16 interviews were conducted in a semi structured way in an attempt to allow the respondents to express their thoughts freely; however, it was still important to cover the areas of interest. The questions set out to reveal whether or not there has been a shift in the dynamics within the local community, particularly regarding agricultural crop production, over time. These interviews were 50 minutes in duration on average and attempted to cover various different aspects which affect subsistence agriculture and rural

³ All respondents signed a letter of release allowing the full use of their names and images.

livelihood strategies. A sound knowledge of the local area and customs along with having a local interpreter helped in achieving a carefully planned and well executed study.

The 12 households selected were approached at random and the most senior person present within the household was asked for an interview. What invariably happened was that, although there was one primary respondent, numerous members of the household would gather around to listen in on the interview and occasionally they would help the primary respondent answer the question. This, unintentionally, created a more open forum type discussion however the responses were still primarily from the key respondent.

Of the 12 household interviews eight were female respondents and four were male. There were nine male headed households and three female headed households, all three female headed households were as a result of the male heads having passed away. The interviews were conducted with the most senior member of the household available at the time of interviewing; therefore six interviews were conducted with the household head, three with the wife of the household head, two with adult children of the house and one with the mother of the household head. The age of respondents varied from 23 years of age through to 86 years of age. Only one of all the household interviewees had formal employment. Only 2 households, of the 12 interviewed, had been in their present site for less than 10 years; with 5 respondents reported living in the same homestead of over 30 years.

The 12 randomly selected household interviews were conducted in isiZulu through an interpreter, while the four purposive interviews were conducted in English. Having grown up in the area I had a fairly sound understanding of the area and I had access to a substantial number of role-players within the community through whom I was able to work and gain access to the relevant people for interviews. The household interviews comprised of two sections firstly an overview of the household characteristics followed by the perspective of the respondent with regards to semi structured questions pertaining to issues around agriculture both at the household level and at the community level.

Although the sample size is not sufficiently large enough to provide any statistically robust analysis of the data there is, none the less, various interesting observations which can be made.

The first interview was a purposive interview with the local chief, Inkosi Zondi. He has been the chief of the local Isibonelo Esihle community for 21 years. He also acted as the extension officer of the region before taking on his role as traditional leader. He was selected as a good interviewee for both his leadership role within the community and for his longstanding engagement in the local area's agricultural activities.

The second purposive interview was conducted with the current local extension officer, Mr Mswanenkosi Mtembu. One of his main projects within the area is a local community run field cultivation project, which is still in its infancy and getting an extensive amount of help from government in the initial start-up phase of the project. The project is an agglomeration of several fields within the community which had long been unutilised which the community then formed a co-operative and requested help both in expertise and capital from the department of agriculture. Mr Mtembu was selected as an interviewee due to his current involvement in the agricultural activities of the local community.

The third selected interview was conducted with Mr Neil Whitehead, the Deputy Manager of the Agricultural Economics and Marketing Division within the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture, Environmental Affairs and Rural Development. Mr Whitehead is involved in the provision of guidance to extension officers throughout the province which made him a good candidate for interviewing. His involvement in agricultural development at a more macro level meant he was able to shed some light on structural issues affecting rural subsistence agriculture within the region. Having been employed within the Department for 41 years mean he also had a considerable amount of institutional memory and was able to shed light on the historical path of development within the provinces agricultural sector.

Due to the often highly entrenched gender roles within the rural community, especially when it pertains to agriculture, it was important to ensure that adequate coverage of women's perspectives were covered. The reason for this is that even though the woman may not be the designated household head, she is usually the most involved with household crop production for subsistence means. Of the 12 household interviewees, eight were women. Furthermore, the fourth and final purposive interview was conducted with Cllr N.P. Luzulane who is the mayor of Ingwe Municipality, within which the Isibonelo Esihle tribal area is situated. She is an active political figure within the region and having grown up in the area, she is familiar with the types of daily challenges faced by the local people along with the change which the area has undergone over time. Being a woman who grew up within the specific cultural environment of the study area at large, she was helpful in shedding some interesting insights into the specific gender roles and the types of changes which have occurred to these roles over time.

The collection of data had several challenges which had to be taken into account in order to minimise the negative impact on the final results.

1. Language barrier: Having only a partial understanding of Zulu I was largely reliant on my interpreter for the translation. Due to the fact that I have a basic understanding of isiZulu I was fortunately able to monitor the amount of „data cleaning“ which was done.
2. Cultural barrier: The sensitivity of racial, gender and cultural differences may have caused a degree of mistrust amongst some of the respondents. Being a white, male interviewer may have created a certain degree of mistrust or censored answers from the respondents. Despite the ending of apartheid 18 years before hand, the racial segregation of wealth distribution is still relatively clearly evident within these rural areas, therefore there may have been some degree of resentment or mistrust amongst the respondents. I noted in several interviews that in the initial stage of the interview the respondents had some hesitancy in responding fully to a question however as the interview progressed the respondents became increasingly relaxed and open with their responses. Taking this into account the

questionnaires were structured in such a way so as to ensure the interview started off with binary questions and ended off with more open ended and subjective questions about perceived changes with regards to subsistence agriculture and livelihoods.

3. Respondent fatigue: The interview took on average 50 minutes to conduct with a few of the respondents becoming a little visibly fatigued towards the end of the interview process. However, fortunately, no respondents pulled out prematurely of the interview or refused to answer the questions.
4. Systematic error: The respondents may have assumed that their responses were a determinant in receiving benefits. This may have resulted in respondents not telling the truth out of self-interest. Despite the fact that the intention of the study was for academic purposes, made clear to them from the outset, this type of error may still have biased the results. Furthermore, in attempting to capture the complexities of societal perceptions around subsistence agriculture and the possible changes in the sector from the individual respondents meant that their personal bias may have prevented them from depicting the situation accurately.
5. Power relations and conflicts: There may be power struggles between different respondents such as traditional leaders and ward councillors which biases the results. From the type of responses the Traditional leader gave, it was evident there may have been a degree of mistrust of the political authorities and disapproval. However, fortunately the area of the study has been relatively stable for many years and very little in the way of large scale conflict has affected the region or its populous however minor disputes over land rights or family feuds may have gone unmentioned yet have affected the results.
6. Resources: a constraint of resources restricted the number of respondents who could be interviewed as the Interpreter has to be paid a daily wage. However I believe this is not a major factor as there was a degree of repetitive answers which began to emerge from the respondents indicating most of the major factors affecting the study had been covered.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Introduction:

The study area is a rural community, Isibonelo Esihle, situated in the Ingwe Municipality which sits in Sothern KwaZulu-Natal's Sisonke District Municipality. The rural community is one of eleven tribal areas within the Municipality which all form part of the old apartheid KwaZulu homeland. The area at large is still significantly underdeveloped and which has an impact on the livelihood strategies of the local inhabitants. The municipality has a large commercial farming sector which forms the basis of the local economy and is the most significant form of employment. The traditional areas are however characterised by a high incidence of poverty and the agricultural sector is almost exclusively subsistence in nature.

Basic Categories	Figures	
Total population	114 120	
Total number of households	21 953	
Ingwe as a % of Sisonke District Municipality	24%	
% of total population urbanised	19%	
% of total population living in a rural environment	81%	
Unemployment (% of income earning population)	29%	
Household income profile (per month):		
No income	39%	
R1 - R1600	52%	
R1601 - R6400	7%	
R6401+	2%	
Gender profile:		
Female	54.2%	
Male	45.8%	
Age Profile:		
0 - 4	13 992	12.3%
5 - 14	34 505	30.2%
15 - 34	34 034	29.8%
35 - 64	20 680	18.1%
65+	5 345	4.7%

Table 4.1: Basic Facts and Figures on Ingwe Municipality
(Adapted from Ingwe Municipality 2010/11 IDP)

Ingwe has a population of 114 120, who reside in 21 953 homesteads, 81% of whom live within a rural context (Table 4.1). According to Ingwe's 2010/11 Integrated Development Plan (IDP), over 90% of the households live on less than R1600 per month, whilst just under half of those being classified as having „no income“. This statistic shows the importance of non-monetary livelihood strategies for the local households. Subsistence agriculture forms one of the more fundamental cornerstones of these livelihoods, especially for the rural homestead. The long term problems associated with high levels of unemployment, 29%, is compounded by the fact that a large proportion of the population is under 35 years of age (72.3%). These factors combine to present significant developmental challenges for the long term future of the region.

An outside observer to the Isibonelo Esihle tribal area is immediately struck by the apparent link between agriculture and the livelihood strategies of the inhabitants in the area. The landscape is dominated by a scattered settlement pattern with households seemingly haphazardly dispersed across the countryside. Apart from the wondering livestock in the area, the patchwork of cultivated lands distributed between the households, is a tell-tale sign of the residence attachment to the soil as a form of livelihood. However, despite the initial perception that agriculture forms an important livelihood strategy for a considerable number of households in the region, all 12 of the respondents referred to a decline in the level of cultivation within this community over time.

“People no longer plant, those who used to plant no longer plant.” Nkosikona Dlamini
(Respondent 5) 34 years of age, household head

“In the past people used to plant well and people used to eat well.” Proteas Langa
(Respondent 4) 66 years of age, household head

The respondents were all acutely aware of the shifting current patterns within the area's agricultural practices and the role which this has had on household livelihood strategies over time. The perceived shift in reliance on agriculture can be attributed to several

different factors, some of which are as a result of endogenous factors while others are as a result of exogenous influences coming to bear on the rural community and its way of life.

When the respondents were posed with a variety of questions about whether or not the local area had changed over time and how this has affected peoples livelihood decisions, they all came to the same conclusion that there had been significant changes within both the local area and on a more individual household basis. There were a variety of answers as to what the exact nature of the major changes were and what the cause behind the shifting aspects of local livelihoods might have been. The explanations ranged from issues of shifting attitudes amongst the new generations, a more monetised local economy, shifting gender roles, a change in government intervention, aspects of community spirit through to shifting patterns in weather and even a shift in taste preferences which lead to a change in diet. These changes all have a profound impact on the role which agriculture plays in the livelihood patterns of the rural people.

The chapter is roughly divided into six sections which follow the themes identified in the responses of the respondents. The chapter is presented in such a way as to try and ensure the authenticity of the responses has been maintained to promote the accuracy of the findings. To start with, two summary tables are presented which give an overview of certain key variables across the 12 household respondents. Table 4.1 and Table 4.2 give a synopsis of the key variables of the respondent and household characteristics respectively, which are discussed in more detail in the subsequent sections of the chapter.

The first section uncovers the perception that certain shifts are taking place amongst the attitudes of the local community, especially among the youth, which is impacting on their decisions to engage in agriculture and in their livelihood decisions in general. The second section reveals an increasing reliance on the formal monetised economy in the livelihood strategies of the rural household and the effect this is having on peoples decision to cultivate a crop. Thirdly, despite the highly entrenched gender roles of the rural community, there appears to be a gradual shifting in defined gender roles. Due to the importance of woman in agriculture, this is having a direct impact on the agricultural

productivity and livelihood decisions of many households. Fourthly, the role of Government is looked at, as it has had both a historical impact on the nature of the rural homelands and it still has a role to play in the development of these underdeveloped regions. The fifth section, takes a look at how the various relational dynamics within the community have shaped and continue to form an important element of the livelihood strategies of the rural people. Finally, there have been several shifts over time, some of them real and others perceived however these shifts have a direct influence on the type livelihood decisions of individuals and households.

Household/ Respondent	Respondent Characteristics				
	Gender	Age	Role	Years in home	Employed
1	F	45	Wife	13	No
2	F	47	Head	9	No
3	F	63	Wife	43	No
4	F	66	Head	30	No
5	M	34	Head	1	No
6	M	60	Head	35	Yes
7	F	27	Wife	1 month	No
8	F	23	Daughter	16	No
9	F	86	Mother	21	No
10	M	32	Son	32	No
11	M	55	Head	15	No
12	F	66	Head	46	No

Table 4.2: Summary of Respondents Characteristics

Household/ Respondent	Household Characteristics												
	Size of household	Children	Females	Males	No. Employed	Pension	No. Social Grants	Garden	Field	No Cultivation	Electricity	Water	Road
1	15	5	6	9	2	0	2	Yes	No		Yes	Yes	Yes
2	7	4	7	0	0	0	4	No	No	1	No	Yes	Yes
3	22	13	15	7	0	2	13	Yes	Yes		No	No	Yes
4	7	4	5	2	1	1	4	Yes	No		No	Yes	Yes
5	6	4	3	3	1	0	0	No	No	1	No	No	No
6	4	2	2	2	2	0	0	Yes	Yes		No	No	Yes
7	6	4	3	3	0	0	4	Yes	No		No	No	Yes
8	7	3	3	4	0	0	3	No	No	1	No	Yes	No
9	11	7	6	5	0	1	0	Yes	No		Yes	Yes	Yes
10	9	5	5	4	0	1	0	Yes	No		Yes	Yes	Yes
11	5	0	2	3	2	0	1	Yes	No		No	Yes	Yes
12	8	5	8	0	1	1	0	Yes	No		No	Yes	Yes
Totals	107	56	65	42	6	6	31	9	2	3	3	8	10

Table 4.3: Summary of Household Characteristics

4.2 Attitudes

The rural areas are characterised by a multitude of unwritten cultural laws and accepted practices. These often play an important role in the way in which life is lived within these rural communities. These laws and traditions have had to shift and transform to a certain degree over time as the dynamics in the community have changed with time. These changes have been embraced by some and lamented by others within the community. When asked how the local area has changed across generations there was a variety of responses; however, the older generations generally came to the consensus that the youth are becoming distanced from their roles within the community.

The attitudes of the people towards agriculture seemed to have shifted over time; the younger generations seemed to place very little emphasis on the need for cultivation. The older generations“ seem to be dismayed at the lack of engagement and general abandonment of agriculture in the area. People are moving away from their traditional ways and cultures and the livelihood patterns have changed towards a more monetised and material focus. Of the 16 interviews, 11 respondents made some reference to the fact that the younger generations were no longer as involved in agriculture to the same extent as previous generations, with some going so far as to simply accuse the youth of „being lazy“.

“People are running away from their original lifestyles and trying to follow western cultures” Inkosi Zondi, traditional leader of the Isibonelo Esihle tribal area

“In the past people would listen to the Inkosi and wait for him to say do this or it’s time to plant. But now people do their own thing, Because of this certain traditions have gone away, for example the „incube“, or festival of the first fruits, no longer happens, only up in Zululand.” Inkosi Zondi

The desire to hand down any agricultural knowledge and the will to learn these skills seem to no longer be valued as highly. The emphasis is shifting away from a livelihood

sustained by agriculture towards a larger reliance on the formal monetised economy to earn a living.

“I tell you my child, when the children grow up these days they have no fathers to teach them the ways, to teach them the ways of the isiZulu. So the elderly take the knowledge to the grave.” Katharina Khumalo, (Respondent 9) 86 years of age, used to be the primary cultivator in the household but now her sight is deteriorating and she is too old to continue farming.

11 out of the 12 household respondents could recall times past when the household had engaged in field crop production, with only two of the homesteads still actively cultivating their fields. In these past times agriculture formed a substantially more important role in household livelihoods however over time the reliance on agriculture has gradually dwindled away. The only respondent, who could not recall a time when the household engaged in field crop production, was because that household had apparently never been allocated a field for cultivation.

“When I was younger everywhere was green from all the crops, but people have stopped planting now, very few people have the strength to plant.” Katharina Khumalo (9)

“In the past it would be unacceptable for someone to not be involved in cultivating but now the children do not work the soil as much.” Monica Nxumalo (Respondent 1)
Primary cultivator in a household of 15 people

When the respondents were asked, what was the difference between those homesteads which were still able to sustain a high level of cultivation and those that were not, there were five broad answers: Lack of will, lack of strength, theft, livestock damage and expensive inputs. The first two categories will be dealt with at this point and the last three will be dealt with later on in the results section. The first category, desire to cultivate and engage in agriculture, was cited as an important aspect of farming and growing crops, particularly by the men. Three men and one woman cited a desire to farm as an important

attribute distinguishing successful farmers. There appeared to be an increasing stigma against agriculture as a form of livelihood, it was more desirable to be employed in formal employment than to work in agriculture.

“The family is involved in the garden but there are some who enjoy cultivating and there are others that don’t. You can’t force everyone to get involved.” Maviyo Langa (Respondent 11) Retired Mine worker who is the primary cultivator and household head.

“Agriculture used to be a bit of a dirty word in schools because students, for punishment, had to go weed the gardens. So you see that’s just it, people said „Idon’t want to be a farmer, I don’t want anything to do with agriculture”” Neil Whitehead, Deputy Manager of the Agricultural Economics and Marketing Division within the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture, Environmental Affairs and Rural Development

There was a perception amongst some of the respondents that the people within the community have become lazy and that they would rather not expend the energy required for cultivation. The rewards from cultivation are obviously not enough to entice people and households to continue cultivation on a broad scale.

“In this area people have no desire to farm.” Nogubonga Ngubo (Respondent 8) 23 years of age and resides in a household with no cultivation.

“People no longer want to cultivate either because they are too lazy or else they do not need to put in the energy.” Constance Mtembu (Respondent 3) Primary cultivator in a household of 22 people, she personally cultivates both a garden and a field plot using oxen for ploughing traction.

“Maybe people don’t like farming, they have money to throw around and buy food.” Senzo Ngubo (Respondent 10) 32 years of age is without employment and assists his mother occasionally in the household garden plot.

“People don’t plough, People don’t like to plough.” Maviyo Langa (11)

“Well I think we just need to go back to what it was and try and encourage people to actually work the land, and we’ve got to get people interested in agriculture because they can subsist and they can even earn a little bit of extra money with surplus produce.” Neil Whitehead, Deputy Manager in the Provincial Department of Agriculture

From personal observation in the area, it is clearly evident that a large number of outlying fields, with their clearly visible contours, were once cultivated however they have long since been abandoned and are overgrown with weeds and grass. Despite a few exceptions who have managed to continue cultivating their field, the general trend is one of neglect and discontinued use of the field plots. A lack in strength was cited as an increasingly constraining factor in crop production, especially amongst the aging generation. Of the 12 household respondents, seven cited a „lack of strength“ as one of their main reasons for abandoning field cultivation; these respondents were all women and were over the age of 45. This is indicative of the fact that as the older generations have come to the end of their physically productive lives and the new generations have failed to get involved in agriculture, therefore the cultivation of fields has fallen away.

“Amandla angnayo ukulima” (no strength to plough) Monica Nxumalo (1)

“Others do well and are able to keep their fields active because they live closer to the field and can keep an eye on it. I live too far away and it is too much work, I have no more strength to keep the field planted.” Proteas Langa (Respondent 4) 66 years of age, has a large garden to compensate for not cultivating a field

“I still use the old way to cultivate my fields, people see me and ask to help them plough their fields, I used to help in the past but now I’m getting old and have no strength, there are very few people left who know how to plough using oxen.” Constance Mtembu (3)

“In stead of the field we grow a larger garden.” Katharina Khumalo (9) 86 years of age

The skills required to cultivate the land successfully is a scarce resource however there seems to be very little transferral of skills from one generation to the next as the younger generations show very little intent on learning how to farm successfully. However, knowledge alone is not enough to ensure a good crop is produced; people need to have the passion to cultivate and be engaged in agriculture in order to improve their chances for success.

“People plant according to their need, if they don’t need to they wont. But they must enjoy planting, without passion it wont work.” Senzo Ngubo (10)

“People need to draw strength from a good garden plot before they can try and successfully cultivate their field.” Aaron Dlungwane (Respondent 6) the local Induna and was the only respondent who was formally employed, he received a monthly salary for his role as a traditional leader. He cultivated both a garden plot and a field.

“If people can’t even cultivate their gardens properly how can they be expected to use their fields productively?” Maviyo Langa (11)

It is not only the rural poor who’s attitude needs to change but that of the well established commercial farmers who often have a high level of agricultural knowledge and skill which could be passed to emerging commercial and to subsistence growers alike. The transferral of management and financial skills would be especially useful for those farmers looking at becoming more commercially oriented and the transferral of more universal skills such as good animal husbandry and proper crop management techniques would be useful to both emerging commercial and subsistence farmers. Both the Mayor and Mr Neil Whitehead referred to the need for skills transferral from the well established farmers to the emerging small farmers.

“Lack of skills, some of the people they get farms from the government and then they don’t know how to farm it so they end up getting the same white farmer to come back and rent that farm from them so that is a problem. So, there is really a shortage of skills, and

then of course the funding, because the land is there, in the Ingonyama trust.” Mayor Luzulane, mayor of the Ingwe Municipality, grew up in the neighbouring tribal area and is an influential political figure in the region.

4.3 Monetised Economy

Rural livelihood strategies have shifted over time away from a reliance on pure subsistence towards a larger reliance on the formal monetised economy. If a household is engaged in agricultural production it is primarily as a form of substitution to the household diet as opposed to the main contributor towards household food security. All 12 households responded that the majority of their monthly budget was spent on purchasing food.

Evidence, of the depth of integration, into the formal monetised economy was evident in the responses to a variety of different questions; some people were nonchalant about the shift while others, such as Inkosi Zondi and others were dismayed at the negative spin-offs which have resulted from people abandoning cultivation. When asked about how the agricultural sector has changed in retrospect over time, Inkosi Zondi replied:

“In the past there was higher productivity amongst households and there was much smaller reliance on buying food. In the past people would only buy things that they could not produce such as sugar, salt etc. however now days people buy everything at the shops including food which they could produce themselves. For example milk.” Inkosi Zondi

Despite the fact that Isibonelo Esihle is a remote rural area which has a thin local economy; there is, nevertheless, a deepening of the monetised nature of the economic activities within the area, as is the case for many of South Africa’s rural communities. The increasing reliance on a formalised monetary economy is clearly evident within the local trading hubs of Ixopo and Umzimkhulu where at months end the streets are choked with the influx of rural shoppers. These people make the migration in to these trading hubs to buy all their necessary food often for the whole month. The heavily laden taxis

which return to the rural areas at the end of the day are indicative of the fact that people are increasingly reliant on buying food as opposed to producing their own.

“People used to not buy as much food, only salt and sugar and soup was a luxury. Most of the food was coming from the soil and milk from the cows for „amasi” but today everything is bought even if you have a cow.” Inkosi Zondi

“People today prefer to collect things from the shops and put it in the fridge rather than to have it fresh from the soil.” Inkosi Zondi

The increasing predominance of the formal economy seems to have also had a negative effect on the local informal trading within the region as people no longer buy from their neighbours but rather from the larger trading centres, such as Ixopo and Umzimkhulu.

“In the past there was more trading within the community, between households, but now people would prefer to buy their produce at the shops.” Maviyo Langa (11)

“Those who can afford it, rather buy from the shops whilst those who can’t afford to buy their food have to grow their own.” Nkosikona Dlamini (5) had recently moved into his homestead and talked of plans for starting a garden plot however at that time there was no cultivation.

The local economy is based almost entirely on the neighbouring commercial agricultural activities of dairy farming and timber. The limited employment opportunities present considerable difficulties for those who are looking for formal employment in the region. Besides the limited opportunities in the trading hubs of Ixopo and Umzimkhulu, the nearest cities are Durban and Pietermaritzburg approximately about 240km and 150km away respectively, with some migrants even travelling as far as Johannesburg in search of employment.

All 12 of the household respondents and all four of the purposive interviewees cited unemployment as a significant challenge facing the community. Even within households where there were employed members, financial stress was a frequently alluded to problem. The total number of people employed within all 12 of the households was eight people, with only five households having an employed member present in the home. Of all the household respondents only one was employed. The official unemployment figure cited for the municipality is 29 % of the working age population, however due to the minimal availability of work in the region there is a high number of people who would fall into the discouraged work seeker range. Six of the household respondents stated that they had never held any formal employment and were unlikely to do so in the future however two of them would occasionally do some form of informal work such as brick making, thatch harvesting or informal hawking.

When the respondents were asked what they thought were some of the major constraints to the area as a whole and to their own livelihoods, in particular, this is some of the responses:

“If we can take away the culture of being employed and have a fuller understanding that we need to employ ourselves. Most of our people prefer to be employed rather than to go out there and make work.” Inkosi Zondi, traditional leader.

“Without employment people can’t afford to buy fertiliser and seed so people are abandoning cultivation, the problem is fertiliser is also becoming more expensive and tractor hire is expensive.” Grace Mbambo (Respondent 12) 66 years of age and she is the primary cultivator. Grows a garden plot.

“I don’t spend much time in the garden because I am out looking for a job.” Nkosikona Dlamini (5)

The legacy of the apartheid grand design where the homelands would provide a reservoir of wage labourers for the formal economy still persists as remittance wages still form an

important part of household income for many of the rural inhabitants. However, at the advent of democracy and the abolition of the Group Areas Act of 1950 there was a surge in urbanisation as the poor people from the rural areas expected to find formal employment in the urban centres.

“People have moved to the cities in a big way, that’s why we have our slums in the cities, people thought there would be more money but if there aren’t jobs then that’s not possible.” Neil Whitehead, Deputy Manager in the Provincial Department of Agriculture

A further problem for those seeking employment is the low level of education which is so often prevalent within these rural areas. A result of systematic underinvestment in education by the former apartheid regime and further mismanagement by the ANC-led government has resulted in a low level of education in the rural areas across South Africa. As a result the work force which emerges from the rural areas is low skilled, with Isibonelo Esihle no exception. The economy of South Africa has been developing; however, it has been „jobless growth“ which means that the most negatively affected segment of the work force is the low skilled workers. When the Mayor was responding to a question about the greatest challenges facing the local rural area, she replied:

“The first challenge is poverty due to the fact that there are no employment opportunities within our area as it is rural. Another challenge related to this is literacy, so most people are not educated enough to get a good job to earn a good salary, so most of the people in these rural areas they depend highly on government grants.” Mayor Luzulane

During research fieldwork a school garden was observed (Plate 1). The school had taken the initiative to promote agriculture as an additional subject to be taught and pursued as a lesson in school. The children were active participants in the garden where they performed the manual labour of planting, weeding, watering and even harvesting. The ploughing services, fences and the seedlings were provided by the DAFF and the produce was then able to be sold by the school as a form of revenue earning. The produce was sold to the local grocery store in the nearby village of Creighton. Furthermore, Mayor

Luzulane made reference to the active promotion of agriculture as a taught subject and skill, by the local and district municipalities.

“Recently we have engaged the minister of higher education to ensure that they use the facilities at the Umzimkhulu FET College to put up something for agriculture so that people can go there and learn more and have competencies in agriculture and then they can come work on the farms around here.” Mayor Luzulane



Plate 1: School Garden

Within the sample of 12 households, 52% of the occupants were children aged between 0 and 18 years of age. Children of school going age might be able help out in the cultivation of the household garden plots or with menial tasks around the home; however, there is very little opportunity for them to contribute financially to the household. Furthermore, the youth who have completed their schooling are cited as struggling to find employment, even those who have achieved a matric or higher level of education. Due to the low level of economic activity in the area, employment is difficult to find. This problem is not unique to this region as those aged between 18 – 30, who comprise the youth, also have the highest unemployment rates nationally.

Further to the question posed about the major obstacles facing the area, people invariably cited youth unemployment as a major development challenge to both their own livelihoods and that of the region. Five of the 12 households stated that there were unemployed youth, aged between 16 and 30 years of age, present in the home.

“Bantwana bami bahlele pezula kwami ngoba asebenzi” (My Children are sitting on top of me because they do not have any work) Constance Mtembu (3) in a household of 22 people with none being formally employed.

“There are no jobs, the youth can’t find work.” Grace Mbambo (12)

“In the past it would be unacceptable for someone to not be involved in cultivating but now the children do not work the soil as much.” Monica Nxumalo (1)

Social grants were the most widespread form of household income, which comprised of 30 child grants and two disability grants spread across seven of the 12 households. Children of school going age and younger, between the ages of 0 – 18, were present in 11 of the 12 households; there was a total of 56 children in the sample population, which is 52 % of the total sample. Pensioners were present in five households; however, there were only six pensioners in total. The expansion of social grants country wide, post apartheid, has had a significant effect on many of the countries poorest households. The rural areas, such as Isibonelo Esihle, have benefited from the increased income stream. This has had a variety of different effects on the rural community. Firstly the greater buying power as a result of more grants and larger grants enables households to buy food rather than needing to produce their own and due to the more regular nature of payments there is more certainty with regards to household income so there is less need to maintain a safety net of household food production. Secondly the higher income has enabled the household to buy better quality seeds and other inputs needed for cultivating which have resulted in better quality production with more advanced technology.

When asked how social grants, excluding pensions, have affected the community, there were mixed responses. Two respondents, both over 60, complained that the child grants introduced laziness and especially the young women no longer needed to cultivate as a result. The fact that seven households drew social grants, excluding pensions, meant that they were obviously in favour of the benefits of the added income.

“Social grants have changed people’s needs, especially young women who no longer see a need for cultivating as they get money for having children. Because women are the ones primarily involved in agriculture if they do not need the food then the fields will not be ploughed.” Aaron Dlungwane (6), 60 years of age.

“The grants have changed. In the past they would pay out in November and then again only in January or February. Payments were irregular. Now payments have become reliable.” Monica Nxumalo (1)

“The grants have empowered people to improve their crops” Monica Nxumalo (1)

The price of food was said to have increased as their budgets no longer seemed able to cover all the necessary household expenditure, however, the fact that the proportion of food bought as opposed to self produced has increased may also be a contributing factor to the constrained budgets. When the households were asked about their monthly expenses, all 12 households cited food as their largest single monthly expense which comprised the majority of their budget.

“We used to buy very little, we would grow all our own food, now we spend so much on food.” Monica Nxumalo (1)

“When I was younger food was only a small portion of the expenses and we never went hungry.” Monica Nxumalo (1)

“Food is so expensive that it takes up most of the monthly expenses, we live from month to month.” Constance Mtembu (3)

Money was not only cited as a constraint on diet but also on the ability of a household to engage in agriculture. The inputs for agriculture are also an expense which households are increasingly unable to meet.

“It all depends; people have to have money, money for seed, money for fertiliser money for fences, without money you can’t even try.” Nogubonga Ngubo (8)

“Things are expensive these days and money doesn’t go far.” Maviyo Langa (11)

A series of questions, regarding inputs, was presented to the respondents where they were asked about the various dynamics which influence their ability to cultivate land and what were their constraints, benefits and possible needs for a future in agriculture. The inputs for cultivation were cited by nine of the household respondents as being excessively expensive, especially if a household had to cultivate a larger field. The majority of households are simply living month to month and do not have the capital to pay for the overheads involved in cultivating large fields. Some of the inputs referred to which are required for cultivation are: labour, tractor hire, fertiliser, seed, fences, chemicals and irrigation. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the wealth of a household was strongly linked to the households ability to cultivate land, livestock holdings was a good indication of the household wealth. This finding was backed up by the literature as found by McAllister (2001) where the number of livestock holdings in a homestead was directly related to the ability of a household to cultivate fields.

When respondents were asked how agriculture had changed over time and what had caused the change, invariably the responses referred to the cost of inputs increasing over time which meant fewer people were able to continue cultivation.

“Inputs are expensive, manpower is expensive. People, if you ask them to do something for you today, you are robbing that person if you only give them R70/day it is supposed to be from R100/day and above.” Inkosi Zondi

“Those who own tractors and those who can afford to plant; they are the ones who plant.” Mncani Dlamini (Respondent 2) 47 years of age, lived in a household with no formally employed people so she was entirely dependent on the four child grants she receives and she had no area under cultivation

Manure/ Fertiliser

Of the nine households which engaged in cultivation six of the households used a mixture of bought chemical fertiliser and livestock manure whilst the remaining three used chemical fertiliser exclusively. The link between the price of fertiliser and the oil price has meant that over the past decade there has been a highly volatile fertiliser price which has steadily increased over this time. The volatility of the world’s economy over the period of the global recession since 2008 has played a pivotal part in the increased volatility of the oil and its associated fertiliser market. This link indicates the interconnected nature of even a remote rural community’s livelihood strategy into the global economy.

“Agriculture is expensive now days because when I was young we used to use kraal manure and very little chemical fertiliser but I can blame ourselves, the Department of Agriculture, because we pushed people towards changing to chemical fertiliser. That’s where the mistake was. But now there are people talking about this organic farming, even though it sounds expensive too, I think its better.” Inkosi Zondi, used to work for the Department of Agriculture as an extension officer, in the area, before taking up his role as the local traditional leader of the Isibonelo Esihle tribal area.

“It is difficult to plant without fertiliser and the right tools, but especially fertiliser.” Proteas Langa (4)

“The soil is getting tired, it constantly needs more fertiliser.” Constance Mtembu (3)

Seed

The preference for commercial seed varieties is evident for most crops, with all nine households engaged in agriculture indicating that they bought seed. Four of the households specified that they use a mixture of bought seed and reused seed while the remaining five households used bought seed exclusively. The only two crops for which seed was still reused on a regular basis was amadumbe and to a lesser extent maize.

“Now we use the seeds which are painted with special chemicals, which helps protect against insects, from the farmers co-op (AFGRI) but in the past we had to use our own.” Aaron Dlungwane (6)

“In the past we would re-use the maize seeds but now we buy all our seeds as they are better quality.” Nkosikona Dlamini (5)

Irrigation

The availability of irrigation was often cited as an important addition to the garden plots as this enabled higher productivity within those gardens which had access to water for irrigation. There was no irrigation schemes initiated for the field lots however the Sisonke District Municipality was still in the process of delivering access to piped water for the homesteads in the area. The water access was most frequently in the form of a garden tap, this enabled households to irrigate their garden plots with relative ease. Of the nine households which engaged in cultivation, six stated that they irrigated their garden plots using their taps whilst the remaining three garden plots simply wait for rain.

“There is a lot that I would like to do if I had more money, but most importantly is feeding the household. Without water the garden doesn’t grow so I would expand the irrigation in the garden so that we can all sleep with full stomachs.” Constance Mtembu (3) is the primary cultivator in a household of 22; her household experienced a recent water disruption, which meant that she is no longer able to irrigate her garden plot.

“I used to have to carry the water on my head from a spring up in the mountains but now it’s much easier with a tap.” Proteas Langa (3)

“Water was always an issue but the new tap in the yard has really helped, because before water was drawn from a long way off.” Maviyo Langa (11)

“The weather is hot and unless you have water the crops will struggle and die.” Senzo Ngubo (11)

Fences

The ability of a household to erect good fences around their gardens or fields plays a big part in the ability of a household to safely cultivate the land. Without the presence of fences the destruction of crops from stray livestock can be substantial and is a significant barrier preventing households from taking up cultivation. All 12 respondents cited fences as a necessity for improved cultivation due to poor livestock management practices in the region.

“The difference is fences; those that can afford to put up fences are the ones who grow good crops.” Monica Nxumalo (1)

“There is potential there to improve the productivity of the area but of course the problem is livestock, you can’t crop if your fields aren’t fenced.” Neil Whitehead

There has been a shift in the animal management practices within the local area. There used to be a certain set of unwritten rules regulating the management of livestock as to when the animals were allowed to graze certain areas and when they had to be moved off for the purpose of planting. During winter the livestock were allowed to graze within the confines of the fields however when planting time approached in spring and early summer the livestock had to be moved up into the rocky mountain slopes to graze in order to ensure that there would be no crop loss to livestock. However, this practice is no

longer adhered to as people simply let their livestock roam wherever there is food available.

“In the past cattle used to be well looked after but now they just roam free and destroy crops.” Proteas Langa (4)

“People just leave their cattle to graze the field unattended; this has caused most people to abandon their fields” Nkosikona Dlamini (5)

“I am forced to plant later in the season in my field because the livestock are only moved off to other grazing areas much later. People do not look after their livestock like they used to.” Aaron Dlungwane (6)

“Those who plant mealies don’t harvest mealies because they have no fences; the animals have eaten the crop.” Maviyo Langa (11)

4.4 Shifting Gender Roles

Traditionally women in the rural areas have a distinct set of expected roles and functions to perform within the household and one of those functions includes a significant proportion of the agricultural labour. It is customary to expect the men to help in ploughing, planting and harvesting but the maintenance such as weeding, watering and fertilising was all strictly the role of women. These defined roles within the household place a heavy burden on women within the household to perform a significant amount of labour without remuneration.

These defined roles were further entrenched by the migrant labour system where it was expected of the men to leave the home and find formal wage employment and for the women to do all the home based work. The persistence of high levels of unemployment and poverty in the rural areas bears an obvious testament to the fact that a migrant labour system is not a sustainable livelihood pattern.

Despite the fact that the defined gender roles within the rural areas are still firmly entrenched in many areas of traditional society, there are signs that these roles are beginning to shift and become more equal. When Mayor Luzulane was asked how she felt the roles of women had changed in the rural areas over her life, she responded:

“Yes things have changed. When I grew up women were not allowed to own any piece of land or house but now women are owning land and houses, even in rural areas now you can own your own house and live with your children even if you are not married. Now when it comes to businesses most of our women are involved in businesses, even in construction and even funeral parlours. There are also a lot of co-operatives which work together helping them make a living from what they are doing. You know when I grew up we used to plough in the fields, big fields, because at that time very few women used to go to school. They say the place of the women is in the kitchen and in the garden, now things have changed in fact more women go to school, even more than men, so that is a change I think is causing that difference in the role of women.” Mayor Luzulane

The sample population within the households was comprised of 65 females (61 %) and 42 males (39 %). At the municipal level females also outnumber the men, as they represent 54.2% of the total population of Ingwe Municipality. The defined roles played within agriculture and the local society as a whole seems to be shifting with time. Despite the fact that women seem to still be the primary source of labour and are still largely the most prominent member of the household involved in agriculture; there seems to be the perception that the role of women is changing with time. The basis of the shifting roles, within agriculture and society in a broader sense, seems to be primarily associated with the current generation of youth.

In response to a question about the main changes in the way in which agriculture was being undertaken now as compared to the past, several respondents referred to a shift in the defined gender roles. Three of the respondents, two women and one man all of whom were over 60, bemoaned the fact that the young women of the community were no longer

involved in agriculture to the same extent as the older generations were. However, there were three respondents, including Mayor Luzulane, who were positive about the perceived shifts in gender roles which was taking place, not just in agriculture but in the community at large.

“The young women, especially, no longer bother; they simply rely on buying from the shops. In the past there used to be a reliance on the soil but that generation is finished.”

Proteas Langa (4)

“Let me tell you this, I know that once I am gone out of this household, they will not continue to cultivate. The children just relax and don’t want to get involved in ploughing, especially the young women.” Katharina Khumalo (9)

“Things have changed. When we were growing up our mothers were actively ploughing. We never went hungry.” Monica Nxumalo (1)

The shift in perceptions around the role of women in agriculture is most pronounced with the younger generations. The younger women do not see a need for their involvement in cultivation to the same extent as what their mothers or the older generations used to do.

“Things have changed because there is no one now telling me to get involved in the garden or showing me how. My mother was very active in the garden when she was younger but without her to show me how... but anyway I wouldn’t work to the same extent as her.” Nogubonga Ngubo (Respondent 8) 23 years of age, her mother had recently passed away a few months before and there was no cultivation taking place for the household

Men are beginning to increasingly become involved in cultivation and other forms of agricultural work which would have previously been seen as strictly women’s work. Of the nine households interviewed which were engaged in farming, six of the respondents were female and three were male. However, four of the nine households had a male as the

primary cultivator in charge of the agricultural work in the homestead. Two of these instances, where men were the primary cultivators, were due to the fact that the son of the homestead had taken over from his mother as she had become too old.

“There are those whose attitude is changing, they are asking questions, especially the men; they are starting to ask questions and take an interest in agriculture.” Grace Mbambo (12)

The observation of the school garden, referred to earlier, raised another interesting point about the gender roles within the community which still seem to be largely entrenched, even amongst the children. In the process of tending the school garden it was strictly the job of the girls to carry the water on their heads from the tap into the field (Plate 2) where the boys would be waiting to water the seedlings (Plate 3).



Plate 2: School Girls Collecting Water from the Tap



Plate 3: School Boys Watering the Seedlings

4.5 Government

At the end of apartheid the former homelands were significantly underdeveloped in terms of infrastructure and basic services. The ANC-led democratically elected government has made significant strides towards rolling out basic infrastructure and services such as roads, potable water, electricity, health care and schools into these rural areas. Despite the fact that these services have not yet reached all rural dwellers it is gradually becoming a norm as opposed to an exception for rural homesteads to have a basic level of service provision.

Despite the fact that only three households out of the 12, had access to electricity, Mayor Luzulane insisted that the municipality had just received confirmation of a new project for the expansion of electricity supply into the region. The provision of potable water was at a more advanced stage, with eight out of the 12 homesteads having access to a tap. The Mayor made reference to the fact that there was a large dam scheduled to be built near the town of Bulwer for the further expansion of water supply into the Ingwe Municipality. The improvement of the road infrastructure has resulted in a greater level

of mobility for the local population, with only two out of the 12 households not having direct road access.

The level of schooling is still an issue of concern within the rural areas of South Africa; however, the attendance rate of rural schools has significantly improved since the abolition of the Bantu education system (Ingwe Municipality, 2010). The issue of health care within the District of Sisonke has improved over time as more money has been invested into the sector; however, the issue of HIV/AIDS has developed into a serious problem. It is estimated that 35 % of the Ingwe population is infected with the virus. Due to the fact that the majority of the population is young, this has serious implications for the future of the region as the burden of health care and various other social problems are expected to increase with time.

When the mayor was asked what has changed over time in the area and whether or not the changes had been constructive she answered:

“There are a lot of changes which have taken place since when I grew up, there were only a few roads in the area with the main transport being horses but now there are a lot of cars and much better roads, even if they are only gravel but the network is much better and people have better access to services and in the past we had no tap water we had to walk to the rivers and get water from the springs but now people are getting taps and most of the people have electricity and even the sanitation, most of our people here in Ingwe have proper sanitation and there are planned projects for rural housing projects so people don’t have to move away from their homes but rather build where the people are.” Mayor Luzulane

Government has made agriculture one of its primary modes of rural development and is in the process of investing a significant amount into the rural areas in an attempt to try and reinvigorating a productive subsistence sector. Of the R2.5 billion budget for the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture, in the 2011/12 financial year, R1.5 billion was allocated for agricultural development support services for small scale and

subsistence farmers (DAEARD, 2011). Furthermore, apart from increasing the budget size, the department has expanded the extension services to small scale producers, with 205 new extension officers hired in 2011, in the province. However, when the respondents were asked, what role government has had in their lives and how this had affected the productivity of the local subsistence agricultural sector? There were mixed reactions, with some people evidently pleased with the improvements in the area while others were not as positive about the role government had played both in the agricultural sector and in a more broad development sense. Four of the respondents expressed their disapproval of the way the political system had worked for them, citing failed promises and undelivered services.

“People believe most of the things is supposed to be done by government, yes some times I see a need for Government to get involved but not in the way people are thinking because if Government has to do everything we could die” Inkosi Zondi

“People would wait for help, they heard a promise to be given seeds and maybe they are still waiting for that.” Mncani Dlamini (2)

“Things have gotten worse, us black people are left with nothing, despite them [ANC] pleading for votes they have not improved our lives. In the past even though there was apartheid at least we had jobs and the economy was better.” Grace Mbambo (12)

Of the 12 household respondents, 10 had been in contact and received some help from an extension officer in the past. The respondents frequently cited these initiatives, started by the Department of Agriculture or else the local municipality, as important in teaching them the skills required for cultivation. Extension services seem to play an important role in the agricultural productivity of the community and the increase in investment in the current year (2011) has encouraged people to cultivate. All nine of the respondents, involved in agriculture, assert that the extension services they received in the past was useful in improving their productivity; however, they also stated that these services have been scarce for several years and there is a need for them to return. Government played

an active role in providing extension services and in facilitating the transfer of agricultural knowledge into this area in the past. However, in the past 20 years a large proportion of these extension services began to fall away in the rural areas especially once the former homeland governments were discontinued at the fall of apartheid. In the Ingwe Municipality IDP (2010, 35) it was recognised that “The level of extension support to emerging agriculture is at a low level and as a result the potential that exists in the traditional areas has not been exploited or developed to any degree.”

“I know the former KwaZulu government used to provide a ploughing service but obviously that stopped some while back. That’s now what we have done a full circle again and we are starting to provide that service again.” Neil Whitehead, Deputy Manager in the Provincial Department of Agriculture

The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) has recently initiated a programme of free ploughing in rural areas, which started at the beginning of the 2011/12 planting season. The helping hand, provided by the government, was cited as having had a positive impact on the local community by spurring people on towards engaging once again in agriculture. Of the nine households respondents engaged in agriculture, seven had had their land ploughed by the Department of Agriculture whilst the remaining two ploughed their own land. The two households who ploughed their own land were the two households which also had fields which were cultivated.

“Recently change has started to happen; people who had no interest in planting are starting to plant again because of the increase in help from the free ploughing.” Nogubonga Ngubo (8)

“This year the government really helped out by supplying a tractor to plough the garden, in the past I had to pay someone else R200 a band; to cultivate my large garden cost me a lot of money.” Proteas Langa (4)

“The extension services could be better, even now I see they are improving but they need to empower people to do things on their own and not have to wait for the extension officer to come.” Senzo Ngubo (10)

“Maybe now I see people are receiving help, some get fences and other types of help, maybe things will change, but fences are the most important thing.” Maviyo Langa (11)

The DAFF has started to place considerably more emphasis on the quality of its extension services, in a bid to ensure that the money invested in these rural areas is well spent and that the rewards accrue to the rural communities. However, even Neil Whitehead concedes that these initiatives have a long way to go before they are efficiently run.

“Now it just depends on how good the people on the ground are as to what kind of success there will be with this initiative. Some have been trying to put some money in their pockets by lending the tractor out for a few hundred bucks in stead of doing their job for free. So it’s difficult to manage.” Neil Whitehead, Deputy Manger in the Provincial Department of Agriculture

“The quality of the extension services has declined, more recently there has been a revival project however it has had limited success due to the lack of practical knowledge of those extension officers in the field, the extension officers are well equipped with laptops and GPS’s however the quality of the work is not there, there is a need for more of a mentorship programme for the transferral of skills to these guys to help equip them with all the necessary knowledge to do their jobs properly. There is a national extension recovery programme but it does have a long way to go.” Neil Whitehead, Deputy Manager in the Provincial Department of Agriculture

Apart from the extension services provided by the DAFF there are initiatives such as the „one homestead, one garden“ project which has been started up by the provincial government in an attempt to further promote subsistence cultivation. The initiative is a collaboration between various tiers of Government which includes the Local

Municipality, DAFF and the provincial government. Mayor Luzulane and Neil Whitehead both referred to the benefits of the „one homestead, one garden“ initiative.

“I’m not sure if you’ve heard of it, it’s called “one homestead, one garden” so that has happened for perhaps the last three years, and they have what they call seed scoops, where people can go along to our district offices and the people can go get a small amount of seeds to do their garden and also things like wheel barrows, spades and so forth.” Neil Whitehead, Deputy Manger in the Provincial Department of Agriculture

One of the major drawbacks with any form of government intervention and support is the fact that there is the chance of developing a situation of dependency, where the recipients become totally reliant on the help provided by government. Neil Whitehead insists that the department is determined not to allow this type of „parasitic“ relationship to develop with its projects which are aimed at establishing small scale farmers as opposed to artificially propping them up. However politicians are often involved in the final decision making process which can distort the objectives of a particular programme.

“The hope is that we don’t make these farmers dependent but that we help them for a few years and then we begin to phase it out but we know that we need their buy in otherwise it won’t work. So we need to invest some money up front to secure that buy in then hopefully encourage them to stand on their own too feet. But of course there is always the politicians who want to pour more money in to these projects to secure more votes but the idea is that this year we provide everything then next year you have to supply some of the inputs and then eventually they have to go on their own. But that’s the idea. Phase in Phase out.” Neil Whitehead, Deputy Manager in the Provincial Department of Agriculture

“Give the people a chance, especially those who want to farm, but of course not everybody is a farmer.” Neil Whitehead, Deputy Manager in the Provincial Department of Agriculture

4.6 Communal Way of Life

Tribal areas are governed by a distinctly collective way of life with a unique set of laws and customs which form an intrinsic part of the society. One of the foundational building blocks of the tribal system is the lack of ownership rights for individuals; the land is allocated with the permission to occupy (PTO) to a household, this includes an area to build a homestead and arable land. Once the land is, either, abandoned or else not used for a period of three years or longer it becomes available to be reallocated by the Inkosi (traditional leader) to a new member of the community.

Land is an important building block in the structure of the tribal communities and the way of life in rural areas. Collective ownership is a central part of the social structure of the rural communities and is an important element in the type of livelihood decisions undertaken by both the community as a whole and as individual households. There are some considerable drawbacks to the collective ownership of land. The major drawback is the lack of incentive for individuals to invest private resources in the land as the benefits may be captured by others in the community, the free rider effect. A good example of this type of breakdown is the issue of livestock destruction of crops. The management of livestock needs to be coordinated in such a way to ensure the fields are free of livestock by a certain time each year. The animals are supposed to be moved to grazing lands up in the hills during the summer months which would then allow the community to cultivate their fields without the need for fences. The problem is that there is no incentive for the livestock owners to move their animals to the hills as they are able to fatten their livestock on the shoots of the freshly planted crops which belong to other households which become available after the rains.

When the respondents were asked what they thought the community's attitude towards agriculture was and whether there was a future for agriculture as a long term form of livelihood there was mixed responses. Of the 12 household respondents, 11 were optimistic that there was a resurgence of interest in agriculture within the community as the Department of Agriculture began to reinvest in the rural areas. There was consensus

among the 11 respondents that they want to improve their own production in the future however they indicated that they needed more assistance from the Department of Agriculture. However, the oldest women (Respondent 9, 86 years of age) thought that agriculture in the area had past its peak.

Only, Mr Neil Whitehead indicated that the current communal land tenure system was an obstacle to the further development of agricultural land and the emergence of a commercial farming sector in the tribal areas. However this school of thought is not restricted to one government official in the department of agriculture, in academic literature there is extensive rationale behind the introduction of a more exclusive form of land tenure to avoid the free rider effect and to stimulate private investment.

“The big problem is the fact that communally owned land, the tenure is not secure. The whole reason why people don’t plant the crops is because there is no security of tenure. There are all sorts of issues, you don’t think there is a problem and all of a sudden these issues arise. Where there is communal tenure there is no security and it’s not going to work.” Neil Whitehead

Despite the negative issues of communal tenure and collective ownership, there are some benefits to the communal ownership structure. The advantage of the fact that there is very seldom a member of the community who is without access to land for some kind of livelihood, this helps ensure against total destitution. Another factor which can be both a positive and a negative facet is the fact that the people are able to draw from their communal ties in order to survive. The communities are often closely knit and so the spirit of good will or „ubuntu“ seems to still play a role in the ability of households to manage times of stress or difficulty.

“When the food runs out, we go to our neighbours and ask for maize meal.” Monica Nxumalo (1)

However there is a limit to the amount of generosity which is given, especially if it is a parasitic type of relationship where the beneficiary simply relies on the productivity of another household, which can cause community tensions.

“Others in the community who are well off don’t plant while others who are not so well off have to plant and then at harvest time those who are well off come and ask for food from the poor even though they did not help in the planting, because of this quarrels often break out.” Proteas Langa (4)

During fieldwork research a community cultivation project was observed, which was supported by the DAFF (Plate 4 and 5). The local community had formed a co-operative and with the support of the DAFF they had successfully fenced off a section of previously abandoned fields where they had reinitiated cultivation. The DAFF provided the community with tractors, fencing, seeds, fertiliser, chemicals such as herbicide and pesticide and they provided the benefit of a full time extension officer. This provision from the DAFF is supposed to last three years after which time the DAFF will begin to withdraw its support in the hope that the project can become self sustainable. When the extension officer was asked about the long term sustainability of the project he responded:

“Um, anyway, there is a hope that there might be a future for this type of project as it gives people hope and it does have a positive impact on those who are involved as there is money invested where there was no money before.” Mswanenkholi Mtembu, Extension Officer for the community cultivation project



Plate 4: Community Co-operative Tractor and Sprayer



Plate 5: Community Co-operative Field Cultivation Project Members

The theft of crops, livestock and fences is a frequently cited problem amongst households, with eight out of the 12 households referring to theft as having impacted negatively on their productive capacity. The problem is not only associated with hunger and food insecurity within the area but is also linked to the issue of an increasing reliance on a monetised economy. The respondents referred indirectly to the fact that the people behind the crime do not necessarily steal out of destitution but rather for the access to

money. This problem indicates a shift away from the community spirit and possibly indicates a decline in social values.

“People not only steal the crops but the fences too, so there is no use in trying to continue cultivating the fields (isimini).” Proteas Langa (4)

“There used to be productive community gardens (isivandi) where we would grow a variety of vegetables, every thing was shared. These gardens were good because no one went hungry. But people became tired of putting in effort and then others would come at night and steal the crops to sell, so they broke down.” Mncani Dlamini (2)

“Even though most people are unemployed there seems they are interested in having fast cash, that means if I have something they would see if they could take it away from me to get cash for it” Inkosi Zondi

4.7 Shifting Patterns: Climate, Land and Taste

The livelihood decisions of individual households are often informed by the events and conditions of external forces. This is particularly relevant for the rural communities who live within the collective structures of a tribal system. For example, due to the collective nature of land ownership a shift in land use affects all the members of the community. Furthermore there are shifts and changes which can occur outside of the local context which will alter the way individual people respond in the types of livelihood decisions they make. One such example is climate, even if the shift is only a perceived shift it will nevertheless influence the livelihood decisions of individuals and households.

The shifting settlement pattern, as a result of increased demand for new houses, has forced agricultural land to be converted into homesteads. The initial spike in urbanisation is slowly diminishing as people realise there is limited prospect for finding formal employment in the large urban centres and that rural livelihoods may be a better option.

When asked how the local area had changed over time three of the respondents over the age of 60 made direct reference to the shift in settlement patterns.

“You see all these houses in front here, this is where my neighbour used to plant his field (ismini) but now people have built their houses in the fields so even if they wanted to they could no longer plant there.” Constance Mtembu (3) 63 years of age

“As the children grow up they just build their houses anywhere, they build there, there, there, even if there is no road.” Katharina Khumalo (9) 86 years of age

The agricultural potential of the homelands has degraded substantially over time. During fieldwork observations of the area it was clearly evident that soil erosion had caused significant degradation to the land. There are three main reasons for the deterioration in the quality of the land. Firstly, poor animal management practices by the community have led to over grazing which denudes the land of the plant cover and increases erosion. Secondly, improper veld management, such as burning the grass at an incorrect time of the season, kills the grass and strips the ground of its protection against erosion. Thirdly, poor agricultural practices, such as a lack of adequate contours and the cultivation of unsuitable soil types, have led to further degeneration of the land. The two reasons for the poor land management practices are; firstly, a lack of incentive to invest or conserve communal land, due to the free rider effect, and secondly, the lack of proper skills and education on the necessary land stewardship methods.

Plate 6 is an illustration taken from the neighbouring community; there is little difference in land quality between the two communities, however, the contrast between commercial farm land and communal farmland is clearly evident in this image. The Umzimkhulu River formed the boundary between the former KwaZulu homeland and the white owned commercial farming area.



Plate 6: Areal Photo Showing the Umzimkhulu River Dividing the Communally Owned Former Homeland Land and Commercial Farming Land.
(Source adapted from Google Earth, 2011)

When the respondents were asked about the major constraints which they faced in their agricultural production and in their livelihood pursuits in general, input constraints such as fencing and irrigation were the obvious answers. However, three of the respondents also cited pests, such as insects and moles as a problem and six of the respondents referred to shifting weather patterns being a cause for concern. This has resulted in the need for more irrigation and the certainty regarding planting times has been reduced due to sporadic rain patterns. Whether or not this shift in rain pattern is true in the area or not is uncertain; however, the perception of more unstable weather conditions can have a direct influence on the extent to which a household engages in crop production. If a household perceives that the risks associated with adverse weather will result in poor crop production or even crop failure then they will rather abstain from cultivation.

“Climate is a problem. By this time we used to have big grasses but now the rain is unpredictable. You doubt to ask for a tractor as you are unsure about when the rain will come.” Inkosi Zondi

“The changing weather is a risk for planting times and makes planning difficult.” Ntombizodwa Gamede (Respondent 7) 27 years of age had only moved into her homestead 1 month before the interview; however, she had already cultivated a garden plot, she was the primary cultivator.

“People put in money and effort, they hire tractors and buy fertiliser and seed but the sun just burns it and all the effort is wasted.” Katharina Khumalo (9)

Not only does an external shift have a direct influence on the livelihood decisions households make but also endogenous shifts can influence a change in behaviour. A change in taste preferences will have a direct impact on the types of crops grown by a household, which will also affect the type of agricultural practices practiced by the homestead.

The staple diet of all 12 households was putu (maize meal), which has remained unchanged over time; however, there seems to be a shift in the source of maize meal. In the past nearly all the maize was grown by the household however there has been a move away from self produced maize towards shop bought maize. Apart from the ease of not having to grind the maize by hand the main reason cited for the shift in preference towards shop bought maize is the improved quality and flavour.

“We ate maize in the past but it was not like it is now, it was hand ground and very coarse and didn’t taste as good as it does now.” Monica Nxumalo (1)

The staple diets of the households seem to have changed little over time however the accompaniments to the meal seemed to have broadened over time. Apart from the decline in maize production there has also been a shift in the other crops grown to eat with the

putu. In the past „amasi“ (sour milk) and „imbuya“ (wild spinach) used to form the basis of the accompaniment; however, as the tastes and preferences have change so too have the variety of vegetables which are being cultivated. In the past maize, pumpkin and beans used to be the most prominent crops now there is a plethora of different crops cultivated, by those households which still engage in agriculture.

“We stopped milking, no more milking, we don’t drink amasi (sour milk) like we used to.”
Maviyo Langa (11)

“We ate more „imbuya“ (wild spinach) in the past and my mother used to only grow pumpkins, maize and potatoes now we grow different crops” Monica Nxumalo (1)

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

The dynamics which influence livelihood decisions amongst the rural poor are by no means homogeneous. There is considerable variation in the context in which each individual household makes livelihood choices. Both exogenous and endogenous factors play a role in the patterns and choices which a household makes in an effort to create a sustainable livelihood.

Agriculture is one of the most common ways of making a living, amongst the rural poor, all over the world. The ability to produce food and be independent of the monetary economy to an extent has allowed households to sustain themselves despite being without any money. However, in the rural homelands of South Africa it has been noted that the reliance of households on agriculture as a form of livelihood is declining. There are several reasons for the apparent decline in cultivation and reliance on agriculture, in this study several dynamics were brought to light through the investigation of a study community in a former homeland in Southern KwaZulu-Natal.

The findings of the study highlighted several important dynamics which affect the livelihood decisions of the rural poor. Firstly, the importance of the historical background to the political past of South Africa has left an indelible mark on the structure and the composition of what it means to be part of the rural poor within South Africa. Furthermore, despite the rural nature of the community it is still intrinsically tied into the structure of the national and even global economy. Despite the thin foundation of the rural economy, which is characterised by high unemployment and low economic opportunities, people are shifting their livelihoods towards a more money-centric focus. This has resulted in a shifting set of livelihood strategies by individual households where they are changing their cultivation practices, changing their migration patterns and even changing their diet. Furthermore, there is change within the community, where the roles

of women appear to be shifting and the younger generations are no longer conforming to the patterns of tradition.

This chapter analyses the results in context of the current literature and puts it in relation to the sustainable livelihoods approach. This chapter is divided up into four sections. Firstly the area is analysed in relation to the historical context of apartheid and the resultant legacy of underinvestment and underdevelopment which has influenced the livelihoods of the rural inhabitants. Secondly, one of the main themes which emerged, from the results, is that despite the thin nature of the rural economy, there is an increasing reliance on the formal monetised economy as a livelihood strategy. The third section is a look at how the various dynamics have changed the livelihood strategies of both individuals and of households and how agriculture fits into their lives now when compared to the past. Finally, the livelihoods of households in the tribal areas is defined by a more corporate type of existence therefore as the community changes the livelihood strategies of the individuals and households have to adapt to the changes.

5.2 Subsistence and Rural Development

Despite the rural nature of the study area, the community is still intrinsically tied into the larger economy of the country. The macroeconomic environment has a direct impact on the functioning of the rural areas and on the livelihood decisions which the rural inhabitants make (Binswanger and Deininger, 1997). Issues such as the level of inflation, labour laws and the level of economic growth all have a direct bearing on the rural populace and the types of lives they are able to lead. Issues such as high unemployment and expensive food items, which were two of the frequently alluded to problems in the study, are often indicators of the fact that these rural areas are intrinsically tied into the larger tapestry of the macroeconomic structure of the country.

Historically the government of South Africa has played a central role in the development of the commercial agricultural sector within the country and has also had a hand in the underdevelopment of the subsistence sector (Keegan, 1989; Bradford, 1990). Therefore it

is the belief of some authors that Government should once again have an active role to play in the agricultural sector however this time in the positive development of the small scale and subsistence sector (Van Zyl et.al. 1995). The former homeland Governments played an active role, in the past; in provide extension services to the small scale cultivators, which seemed to be valued by those who were fortunate enough to receive them. These services, however, did little to move the sector beyond subsistence and when the services where discontinued at the end of apartheid, the small scale agricultural sector and the livelihoods of those involved suffered as a result.

The rural homelands throughout South Africa are still plagued with high levels of unemployment and with a low level of economic opportunity despite the oppressive apartheid regime having ended 17 years ago. Furthermore, these areas are still considerably underdeveloped in terms of infrastructure and basic services (De Swart, 2003). Despite the fact that progress was being made in Ingwe Municipality, in terms of role out of basic services and infrastructure, the study area still had a long way to go before the provision of basic services had reached all the members of the community. Furthermore, it is one thing, bringing basic services to an area but its considerably more difficult trying to stimulate a long run sustainable growth path from such a small economic baseline.

Underinvestment and underdevelopment of the rural homelands are part of the apartheid legacy (Bundy, 1989; Legassick and Wolpe, 1976); however, at the end of apartheid the withdrawal from direct state involvement in the agricultural sector, by the ANC-led government, meant that a significant number of services were discontinued to the rural areas. The state began refocusing its efforts on land reform and reduced its participation in extension services. As a result, households which used to rely on the help of homeland government extension services began abandoning cultivation.

More recently, there has been a realisation, at a policy level, from the various tiers of government that development needs to be a holistic process, one which includes the environmental integrity of the region along with the social and economic factors involved

in order to ensure a long term sustainable future (DoC, 2011). The agricultural sector forms an important link in the chain of development within South Africa due to the rural nature of a large proportion of the population and the limited short to medium term prospects of formal job creation in the secondary and tertiary sectors, especially given the skill shortage experienced in the country.

KwaZulu-Natal, as a province, has been identified as vulnerable to environmental degradation (DoC, 2011); which will have a direct implication for the future of any plans to use agriculture as a basis for development. Therefore in the official Provincial Government Development Strategy (PGDS) paper it was highlighted that there would be an increase in investment into the agricultural and environmental sectors. This has been done in an effort to ensure the environmental capacity of the province is maintained in order to help facilitate the broader development agenda of the province into the future.

A realisation of the importance of agriculture and the potential for using agriculture as a tool for development has meant that the current government has begun to reinvest into the sector. Led by the provincial department of agriculture, through a myriad of projects, the various tiers of government have increased the investment in small scale agriculture. One of the more recent projects, the „One homestead, One garden“ project, has been rolled out across all eleven of the district municipalities of the province, since 2009, with a budget of R100 million, for ploughing services and additional funding for seed scoops and extension support (DEARD, 2011). The free ploughing services, provided by the Department of Agriculture, was cited by the respondents as a significant aid for those households which made use of the service. The drive for rural development through small scale agriculture in KwaZulu-Natal has been reasonably successful; however, the initiative is still relatively new and the long term development outcomes are yet to be seen.

Despite the fact that the agricultural sector contributes just fewer than five percent of the provincial domestic product, it is a central part of the nation's food security, providing 30 percent of the national agricultural output (DoC, 2011). Furthermore the sector

contributes over seven percent of the provinces employment figures and has the potential to create more jobs than any other sector due to its labour intensive nature. The Provincial government has initiated several projects, such as the „One-home, One-garden“ project and the „war-on poverty“ programme, in an attempt to help improve food security and solidify the sustainable livelihoods of the rural poor in the province (DEARD, 2011). It is important to see Government supporting the livelihoods of the rural poor however, as was recognised by Mr Neil whitehead from the Department of agriculture, it is important not to create a situation of dependency on government. There needs to be a greater emphasis on an upward mobility, where people are empowered to move beyond a state of reliance on hand-outs towards self sustainability.

5.3 Rural Economy

The decline of field crop production within the study area was clearly evident through observation of the area along with confirmation from both the household respondents and the selected respondents. This clearly backs up the findings of the literature which has found a similar pattern throughout the former homelands, where field production has been abandoned over time. The literature cites a direct correlation between the abandonment of field cultivation and the expansion of garden crop cultivation (McAllister, 2001; du Toit and Neves, 2007; Adey, 2007). This pattern is strongly supported by the data where only two of the 12 household respondents were still actively engaged in field cultivation whereas nine had an active garden plot.

If the government intends on pursuing a development agenda involving the expansion of agricultural productivity, there will need to be a dramatic reversal of the current trend in the sector. Despite the rising prominence of garden plots they are scarcely large enough to become financially viable production sites to convert to a commercial enterprise. Therefore there will need to be an assessment of the viability of reviving field plots and making them more productive. Apart from the infrastructure and input requirements which would be needed; such as fences, irrigation, fertiliser and road access, the issue of sourcing a demand for the produced goods would need to be tackled. There is a

possibility of tapping into the expanding supermarket chains; however, these usually have stringent health and safety regulations along with demand for expensive cold storage and logistical requirements which are significant barriers to entry for small scale individual farmers to meet.

Due to the low economic potential of the rural area, there is a high reliance on earnings from external sources in order to sustain the needs of a household. The two major sources of earnings for these rural areas are: firstly, through remittance wages and secondly, through social grants. Remittance wages have seen a decline over the past few decades as the demand for low skilled wage labour has declined in favour of mechanisation (du Toit and Neves, 2007). However, the social grant system has been radically expanded throughout South Africa and has had a significant impact on the lives of the rural poor. The social grant system has provided a back stop against destitution for millions of people though out the country and despite the limited extent of this research the positive effects of having a stable income provided numerous households with the dignity to lead a sustainable livelihood. Social grants were the main source of income generation among the household respondents.

Access to finance, to cover the input costs of cultivation, was often cited as a significant stumbling block for several households. Although the respondents did not articulate the need for credit, Sender and Johnson (2004) are of the opinion that access to credit will alleviate the cash flow problems experienced by rural households. There is a greater reliance on bought inputs such as seed, fertiliser and a shift in the mode of ploughing away from traditional oxen towards tractors. This has resulted in prohibitively high input costs and due to the subsistence nature of production without access to an external source of income the household is unable to afford to cultivate. The drive, by the Department of Agriculture, to provide seed scoops and free tractor ploughing services to homesteads is a good alternative to help alleviate the constraints of entry. However, the small size of the seed scoop and allocated ploughing time mean that this initiative is primarily aimed at subsistence production and not towards creating commercially oriented small scale producers.

5.4 Shifting Livelihood Strategies

The decline in field cultivation appeared to be indicative of a declining reliance on agriculture as the primary form of livelihood foundation. The move away from a livelihood based on agriculture has been accompanied by a move towards a greater reliance on the formal monetised economy. The fact that all 16 of the interview respondents referred to some kind of financial stress as being an important factor in the livelihoods of the rural people goes to show the centrality of money as the foundation of their livelihoods. This finding is backed up by the literature, where authors such as du Toit and Neves (2007) along with Vink (2003), have found that livelihoods are turning towards a more monetary focus. The trend shows that agriculture is fulfilling a more supplementary function in the livelihood of rural people as opposed to it being the central foundation. The importance of cultivation, to the individual's or household's livelihood decision making process, may have shifted from being a central foundation towards more of a risk reduction strategy and back stop. The fact that the ability to cultivate remains an option, for a homestead, serves the purpose of insurance in the case of absolute destitution or if the household faces a sudden shock due to loss of income. Due to the flexibility of cultivation, it is able to be utilized when it is convenient for the homestead and then neglected when it no longer has relevance, without the household having to commit very many sunken costs.

The effect of having an income stream coming into the homestead on a fairly regular basis can have one of two effects on the household's agricultural productivity and livelihood choices: Firstly, households can afford to cultivate with better quality inputs which would improve their productivity. Secondly, they could rather buy their food from the shops and not bother with cultivating the land and growing their own food. This is indicative of the responses which gave a mixed set of outcomes with regard to, why certain households abandon cultivation while other households manage to maintain a productive plot.

There appears to be an increasing perception amongst the respondents that there is a significant shift in the local weather patterns towards a more erratic rainfall pattern and longer periods without any rain. The result is an increase in risk perception around planting, without some form of irrigation the respondents felt that the risk of losing the crop due to desiccation was considerably higher. As a result the respondents placed a considerable amount of intrinsic value on the ability to irrigate their garden plot. The perception of crop loss or damage is a considerable binding factor when households make decisions about whether or not to commit resources into cultivation. The provision of some form of insurance may improve the productivity of the sector as households are more confident they will realise a return on their investment. Sender and Johnson (2004) believe that improved access to insurance facilities will reduce the risk of planting and encourage more households to engage in cultivation.

The level of rural to urban migration appears to have slowed down, which aligns with the views of du Toit and Neves (2007). As it has become more abundantly clear that despite the higher wage potential in urban areas, there is still a high level of unemployment in the urban centres therefore migration for an improved livelihood is not necessarily guaranteed. The result is that people are realising that a rural livelihood may indeed be a better option, than an urban one, due to the fact that there is an opportunity for a more diversified set of livelihood choices. The result of more people remaining in the rural areas has been an increase in the number of rural dwellings in the study area. As a result land which was once allocated as arable fields for cultivation have been changed into sites for residential use.

An interesting response, which was only vaguely alluded to in McAllister (2001), has been the shift in taste preferences amongst the people. In the study the preference of bought maize meal over own grown maize has resulted in maize being cultivated less now than in the past. The improved taste and texture of the shop bought maize has made it more desirable, further entrenching the reliance on a monetised economy. The diet has also become more varied which has resulted in a greater variety of vegetables being cultivated.

The respondents showed an interesting shift towards the adoption of new input technologies such as chemical fertiliser and new seed varieties. The possible reason for an increase in usage of commercially produced seeds was three fold. Firstly commercial varieties often had better yields as a result of advances in technology and improved genetics. Secondly harvesting vegetable seed is often very difficult or else the vegetables are all eaten before the plant was able to produce seeds. Thirdly the seeds are often treated with special chemicals, against pests and disease, which ensures a better yield when commercial seed varieties are used.

5.5 Communal Livelihoods

The respondents seem to suggest the defined roles of women and the youth in the rural community are beginning to change. Women have been the proverbial backbone of the rural household as they have had to provide a substantive amount of labour for household tasks for little or no remuneration (Ngqaleni and Mkhura, 1996). The defined roles of women have been to remain at home while traditionally the men would go out and seek formal employment and send home remittance wages (Baiphethi and Jacobs, 2009). Despite the fact that women in these rural areas are still largely confined to perform the majority of household tasks, there does appear to be a gradual expansion of women's rights. However some of the older household respondents lamented the neglect of agriculture, as the younger women began to rely on child grants and less on cultivation. The perception seems to be that the youth in general are becoming less involved in the processes of farming over time with some respondents even going so far as to claim the youth are becoming lazy.

Several male respondents cited the desire to farm as an important facet in determining the success of a household in its cultivation endeavours. A possible reason why men cited the desire to farm as an important determinant for successful farming is likely because men, unlike women, usually have a choice as to whether or not they will engage in farming. However, this observation is important as the realisation that „not every one is a farmer“,

in the words of Neil Whitehead, Deputy Manger in the Department of Agriculture, which is often overlooked when designing a development initiative which includes agriculture.

The central foundation of African communal life is based upon, what Mafeje (2003) calls, the corporate ownership of land. The livelihood patterns of the entire community were intertwined in the past as all the households were reliant upon the land for their subsistence. However, as households move towards a more money-centric livelihood pattern the links within the community begin to weaken. The decoupling of the community with the land has begun to break down certain communal ties and traditions, such as the festival of the first fruits „*incube*“. McAllister (2001) cited a similar trend amongst communities in the rural Eastern Cape.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This study set out to identify the various dynamics which affect the subsistence agricultural sector in South Africa's former homeland regions. The study was set in Southern KwaZulu-Natal, where a sample of 12 households was selected and key respondents were interviewed from each. Furthermore, four purposive interviews were conducted with select respondents who all had a linkage into either the community or else the subsistence agricultural sector. The rationale behind the study was to determine what factors affected the livelihood decisions within these rural households and for the community as a whole.

The literature dealt with the international context of subsistence agriculture and highlighted its importance as a global player in providing a livelihood for billions of the world's rural poor. The South African context is, however, unique in the historical context of apartheid where the systematic underdevelopment and severe legislation of racial segregation has left an indelible mark on the rural landscape nearly two decades after its demise. The results of the interviews often lined up with the literature on the broader dynamics causing structural shifts in the rural areas however some interesting nuances also become apparent through the interview process.

The state played an important role in the development of a large scale commercial farming sector, which was largely white owned, during apartheid. Furthermore, the former homeland governments played an important role in sustaining a basic level of extension services to the rural areas to sustain a subsistence sector in the rural homelands. At the advent of democracy, the Government withdrew from agriculture which resulted in the commercial farming sector turning to the private sector for services however the subsistence sector was largely left unattended. As a result overheads and inputs soon became too expensive and the subsistence sector soon began to decline. Recently the Department of Agriculture has begun to reinvest into the provision of extension services into these rural areas, so it remains to be seen if the sector can be revived through government intervention.

Various dynamics have changed over time within these rural areas, the demand for low skilled wage employees has declined, which means the demand for migrant workers has dropped, resulting in fewer remittance wages flowing into the rural areas. However, the social grant system has been expanded across the country and there has been a dramatic increase in inflows of social grants into households. Despite the thin rural economy within these homelands, the handout of social grants has played an important role in the increasing reliance of rural livelihoods on the monetised economy and diminishing the reliance on subsistence.

The functioning of the subsistence agricultural sector in the homelands has changed over time and the study area is no different. Over the course of time, an ever increasing number of homesteads have abandoned their field cultivation, most of them have, however, done this in favour of a greater focus on the garden plots adjacent the homesteads. The reduced need for inputs, such as seed, fertiliser and labour and the increased ability to irrigate the plots as a result of access to piped water have all resulted in improved productivity. Furthermore, the poor animal management practice in the community, increases the threat of crop loss, has meant the need for fences has made field cultivation overly expensive and an unattractive investment.

One factor revealed from the literature, and was confirmed by the study, was the large variation within the subsistence agricultural sector, even within a relatively homogenous community. The effects of certain variables had different affects on different households, for example the presence of social grants proved to be an incentive to some and a disincentive to other households to engage in cultivation. This is indicative of the fact that the policy response, in an attempt to stimulate growth and development through the agricultural sector, needs to be highly specific and creative in order to be inclusive of the heterogeneous subsistence sector. The policy needs to be demand led and not imposed from a top down supply side approach. Government needs to play a facilitative role, allowing the sector to develop by providing a more conducive market environment and the correct infrastructure to ease the growth path.

Several shifts have occurred, both at the community level and within individual households. Firstly there has been shift in the taste preferences, people no longer want to eat coarsely ground mealie meal, but prefer the finer ground mealie meal bought in the store. This means people are not as inclined to plant their own maize, which used to be the predominant field crop, which means the demand for field cropping has declined. However, there is an increased variety of vegetables in the diet which means the intensity and productivity of garden plots increases as the demand for improved vegetable production increases. Secondly there has been a shift in the perceived role of women and men in the community. Although it is still relatively entrenched in many areas of the community, there does seem to be a gradual move away from defining a women's role as the primary cultivator. Finally, there is a shift in community dynamics; as the ties with the land, through collective ownership, gradually change over time as fewer people draw their primary source of livelihood from the soil. This results in a decoupling of the community and their interlinking common denominator, which is the land.

The Government of South Africa has identified small scale and subsistence agriculture as an important sector in the drive to bring development and economic upliftment into rural communities throughout the country. This study has direct implications for a development initiative within the local community as it can be used to establish some of the major dynamics which are influential in the lives of the Isibonelo Esihle rural community. However, the findings are also indicative of more structural changes in the way in which rural households and communities form their livelihoods throughout the country.

The provision of key services, to rural communities, has a positive impact on helping individual households and the community as a whole to overcome certain barriers which may be too expensive or technical for them to do independently. In the Isibonelo Esihle community, improved irrigation, through the expansion of municipal piped water, has resulted in improved garden plot productivity for those household with access to a garden tap. There is potential to continue to improve the productivity in the region through a

greater investment in the irrigation for garden plots. Furthermore, the re-introduction of the expanded extension and ploughing services, provided by the Department of Agriculture, is having a positive effect on the productivity of the garden plots and there is potential to continue to improve the services to the community through greater outreach of the programme. However, as with all free services, there is the risk of creating a state of dependency on the Government as opposed to creating a self-sustaining agricultural sector, which is what the Department of Agriculture is aiming for.

The planning of any form of rural development, especially one involving agriculture, has to include the participation of women and youth as central to the programmes design. Despite indications of shifting gender roles within the community, women still play a central role in the agricultural activities of the household and youth comprise the majority of the rural population. The corporate ties to the land and the cultural norms are not set in stone; they are dynamic facets of these rural communities and have to be accounted for in the planning phase of any project.

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Maps:

Map of KwaZulu-Natal and Sisonke District: Adapted from Sisonke (2010)

Map of Umzimkhulu River: Accessed from Google Earth on 10 December 2011

APPENDIX A

Household Respondents:



Plate 1: Respondent 1: Monica Nxumalo

Age: 46
Primary Cultivator

Role: Wife to household head
Years in home: 13



Plate 2: Respondent 2: Mcani Dlamini

Age: 47
No Cultivation

Role: Household head
Years in home: 9



Plate 3: Respondent 3: Constance Mtembu

Age: 63
Primary Cultivator

Role: Wife to household head
Years in home: 43



Plate 4: Respondent 4: Proteas Langa

Age: 66
Assistant Cultivator

Role: Household head
Years in home: 30



Plate 5: Respondent 5: Nkosikhona Dlamini

Age: 34
No Cultivation

Role: Household head
Years in home: 1



Plate 6: Respondent 6: Aaron Dlungwane

Age: 60
Primary Cultivator

Role: Household head
Years in home: 35



Plate 7: Respondent 7: Ntombizodwa Gamede

Age: 27
Primary Cultivator

Role: Wife to household head
Years in home: 1 month



Plate 8: Respondent 8: Nogubonga Ngubo

Age: 23
No Cultivation

Role: Daughter to household head
Years in home: 16



Plate 9: Respondent 9: Katharina Khumalo

Age: 86
Retired Cultivator

Role: Mother to household head
Years in home: 21



Plate 10: Respondent 10: Senzo Ngubo

Age: 32
Assistant Cultivator

Role: Son to household head
Years in home: 32



Plate 11: Respondent 11: Maviyo Langa

Age: 55
Primary Cultivator

Role: Household head
Years in home: 15



Plate 12: Respondent 12: Grace Mbambo

Age: 66
Primary Cultivator

Role: Household head
Years in home: 46

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire

Section A: Household Profile

Q1		Household	
	Respondent Profile:	Response	Notes
1	Name		
2	Gender		
3	Age		
4	Role in household		
5	How long have you lived in this Household?		
6	Have you spent most of the last year in this house? If Not. Why Not?		
7	Are you employed? If Yes: Doing What?		
8	If No: What was previous employment? When?		
9	Highest level of education completed? If interrupted, Why?		
10	Are you still studying? What are you studying?		
	Household Characteristics:		
1	No. of people living in the household		
2	No. of people employed living in the household		
3	No. of Pensioners receiving old age pension		
4	No. of social grants		
5	No. of children living in the household		
6	No. of females		
7	No. of males		
8	Number of buildings within the 'Umuhi'		
9	Access to a road		
10	Access to electricity		
11	Access to water		
12	Number of Livestock		
	# Goats		
	# Sheep		
	# Pigs		
	# Chickens		
	# Cattle		
	# Donkey		
	# Horse		

Note: People in the household have to be living in the home for at least 4 nights a week.

2.1 What are some of the major challenges this household currently faces and has faced in the past five years? And what have been the main causes for the hardships?

2.2 How does/did the household deal with these issues?

3.1 What are the household's main expenditure items?

3.2 Has this changed over time? What have been the main changes and why?

- 4.1 What are the main sources of household income?
4.2 Has this changed over time? What have been the main changes and why?

- 5.1 What is the staple diet of the household?
5.2 Has this changed over time? What have been the main changes and why?

- 6.1 Does this household have a garden plot? Is it still cultivated? If not, then why?
6.2 Does this household have a field plot? Is it still cultivated? If not, then why?

- 6.3 What crops are grown regularly by this homestead?
6.4 What crops are currently under cultivation? (if any)
6.5 Are these crops grown mainly for household consumption or sale?
6.6 Has this changed over time? What are the reasons behind the change?

- 7.1 Does this household store food for prolonged periods of time, for example into winter or the following season?
7.2 How does this household deal with crop failure?

Section B: Community Profile

8. How has the surrounding areas and community changed over time, with particular attention to agriculture?
(Continually refer to present, 5 years ago, 10 years ago and longer for older persons)

- Area under cultivation.
- Type of crops grown
- Proportion of households growing crops
- Consistency of crop production
- Ownership/ access to land

If there has been a shift in production identified:

- What factors have influenced this change? Identify the most important.
- What enables households to engage in crop production compared to those that don't?
- What is the community's attitude towards crop production? Has this changed over time? What has caused the shift in attitude?
- Are there certain sectors of the community which do better than others in crop production? What is the reason for this? Has this changed over time?

Section C: Household Production

- 9.1 Does this household sell any crops? (Gifts to / from neighbours) changed over time?
9.2 Has this changed over time? What have been the main changes and why?

- 10.1 How is the land tilled?
10.2 Has this changed over time? What have been the main changes and why?
- 11.1 How is the land irrigated/watered?
11.2 Has this changed over time? What have been the main changes and why?
- 12.1 Main source of labour?
12.2 Has this changed over time? What have been the main changes and why?
- 13.1 What form of fertilizer (if any) is applied & how?
13.2 Has this changed over time? What have been the main changes and why?
- 14.1 Have you ever partaken in an agricultural extension programme or been visited by an extension officer?
14.2 Was the assistance useful and in what way?
14.3 Did you improve your production or have any other benefit accrue to the household as a result of the assistance?
- 15.1 What are the main sources of seed or seedlings?
15.2 Has this change over time? How?
- 16 What is the most constraining resource\factor to increasing production?
- 17.1 Have you ever played a role in the past?
17.2 Has your role changed over time and why?
17.3 Where did you learn your skill?
17.4 What factors influence the amount of time you dedicate to crop production activities?
17.5 If you do not currently play an active role in production, what might influence you to get involved in the future?
18. Is there any thing further you would like to add, regarding agriculture and the livelihood decisions of this household or community?