

Meeting Report

Focus Area:	LandNNes Food System Action Research
Date:	03 & 05 June 2020
Venue:	Mpofana; Mshwathi; Richmond & Mkhambathini

Activity:

Buying fresh produce and supporting households in need

Objectives:

Mapping small scale farmers, scholar transport drivers and households in need of food

Minutes:

Background:

LandNNes in collaboration with Gender CC, ACBIO and Food Lab, intends to map small scale farmers, scholar drivers and households in need of food in the uMgungundlovu (KZN) and Vhembe (Limpopo) District. The project is working together with a similar initiative that has been undertaken in Gauteng under the umbrella of the Covid-19 which was initiated by ACBIO. The action research will help identify three crucial areas of localized/informal food systems and how they intersect: urban and rural food production by small scale producers; localized informal fresh food markets and the nature of their value chain; households food consumption dynamics and what informs where households purchase food and what food they purchase.

This initiative has a very limited budget.

This research focused on vulnerable groups as a whole, without a specification on farm dwellers but as they are our constituencies, they were included in the process. As this was a pilot, all vulnerable groups had to be identified across/in uMgungundlovu. It was agreed from the start that as there is limited budget, some/few farm dwellers will be part of the research.

Project objective:

In brief, the project has three aims:

1. To buy food from small scale farmers and to pay scholar transport drives to transport it to houses in urgent need of food. The assumption was that the livelihoods small scale farmers and bakkie owners have been disrupted by COVID-19 and this intervention could support them.

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2. To use the information collected to map a local food system that can be supported into the longer term, including by supporting small farmers to get access to Government disaster relief funding. There is a small budget to assist the participating farmers to purchase the inputs they need in the short term.

3. The experience and information is used to help rebuild a local food system in the long term that is more resilient and able to withstand shocks, like COVID-19 or climate change or economic recession. This would include developing policy proposals.

The immediate focus is the first outcome, as well as supporting inputs to small farmers and households in need of food to support them through this Covid-19 disaster.

Current status:

Trial run completed; mapping still to be done and data collated and reported on.

LandNnes Process:

Initially the project relied on many Organizations for data, FSG and uMgungundlovu Agricultural Enterprise Development Agency (UMEDA) for small scale farmers and for the scholar transport drivers and households in need, they relied on PACSA, Office of the Premier, AFRA (QM) and BESG. The numbers of how many producers to procure from and of how many households in need as well as how many transported, had to be divided amongst all Organizations. Another organization joined the initiative, eMahlathini, to help identify small scale farmers. Tema and Nontokozo, from eMahlathini eagerly shared their data of small-scale farmers and since the other Organization had been quiet, the work continued with eMahlathini members. In parallel to the planning process, there were trainings being held remotely. These trainings were designed to show individuals how to use the tool that will be used to capture all the data of small-scale farmers and beneficiaries of fresh produce. Through the help of Philile, from the Office of the Premier, 3 scholar transport drivers were contracted. On Wednesday 2 different procurements occurred, one focused on AFRA's constituencies and the other focused on FSG, Emahlathini etc.

AFRAs Process:

AFRA's role since the project began, has been focusing on including farm dwellers in the process as farm dwellers in need and at a later stage AFRA was given the opportunity to include farm dweller farmers (small scale farmers) and scholar transport drivers. This was to be achieved through engagements with Qina Mbokodo District. AFRA began looking for data (early May) that reflects this data and this was conducted through Siyanqoba & Qina Mbokodo District. As soon as the data came through, Samke decided which municipalities the project will be procuring produce from as well as municipalities where households in need will be identified. For small scale farmers, the decision was based on what produce they had and there had to be a variety of options. For needy household, Samke was steered by the guidelines that had been shared for identification of beneficiaries.

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External Process:

During the research, PACSA communicated that they will be supplying food parcels for 200 households. This was welcomed by LandNNees and AFRA as we all saw an opportunity for collaboration. PACSA communicated that they will be buying food and vegetables and LandNNees requested that the vegetables be procured from the farmers they have been engaging. Individuals, like Laurel, donated additional vegetables. At that stage this meant that the overall objective of the research can be met and this was done with the support of the 2 drivers. PACSA began doing deliveries on Thursday and on their first day, it was reported that they happily exceeded the number of households they had planned to support. It was agreed on that day, that 10 parcels be given to AFRA to distribute to their constituencies and that was successfully achieved.

Reflection on farm dwellers- procurements and beneficiaries:



Commented [u1]: These 3 women live in UCL farm in uMshwathi Municipality. They all are head of households, two of them are widows and one has a disabled child.

Procurements:

On 3 June 2020, through AFRA, with the help from Siyanqoba and Qina Mbokodo, small scale farmers were supported by LandNNees in procuring fresh produce. Two municipalities were identified and 10 women farmers supplied vegetables ranging from dry beans, spinach,

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green maize, potatoes, amadumbe, sweet potatoes, chilies, avocado and oranges. Farmers in other parts of the district also provided pumpkins and butternut.

The farmers appreciated the support and they will all be receiving inputs



Beneficiaries:

On 5 June 2020, through AFRA, with the help from Siyanqoba and Qina Mbokodo, 10 needy households received food parcels in two municipalities. The food parcels contained Samp (5kg), Maize meal (5kg), tea, sugar, potatoes (7kg), 1 spinach bunch, 1 bag of mushrooms, 1 Wonder bag (used for cooking), about 2-3 kgs amadumbe, Oil, canned fish, chilies, avocados, half a dozen of green maize, 2.5 kg dry beans, 2/3 oranges and lemons, 2-3 kgs sweet potatoes, green beans (5kg) and 1 cabbage per household. Some pumpkins and butternut were also distributed. This process was successfully completed.

Reflections:

Challenges

1. Procurement

The procurement was initially planned for 3 local municipalities: Mpofana; uMngeni and uMshwathi but only two municipalities, Mpofana and uMshwathi sold produce. For all procurements there were multiple engagements with farmers before the procurement date. The challenge with uMngeni arisen the day before the procurement, when they were asked for banking details, they stated they can't go any

Commented [u2]: This is one of the 3 families that received food parcels in Glen Echo farm in Richmond Municipality. The houses are located inside the bushes not far from the main road, appr. 4km away. The houses were built by the land owner and two households have members employed on the farm. The one household where a granny lives with her grandchildren, no one works on the farm and the land owner has attempted to evict her but community reps intervened. The women and children are in serious need of food, she shared that in some cases she goes and beg for food.

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further with the process without receiving a confirmation from their local Councillor. The Councillor was contacted and told about the project and AFRAs involvement. The conversation concluded with an agreement that the procurement won't be happening due to time constraints and that in future he will be consulted early.

The small-scale farmers, farm dwellers, use small pieces of land for cropping and that meant their produce was small. A long trip was taken for acquiring small amounts of produce and it didn't seem productive because the trip took 3 hours and less vegetables were bought.

The other challenge on the same farm, their sweet potatoes was in a terrible state and they were not bought even though they were selling them. They had prepped about 50kg of sweet potatoes and they were rejected.

The farmers changed their prices which we had agreed on telephonically. When we arrived, they changed their prices to a higher price.

The one farmer in uMngeni that we decided to procure from as she wasn't part of those waiting for Councillors approval, we got lost trying to find her location and the network was terrible.

Another observation is that the farm dwellers sell in small quantities using dishes as measurement tools, this meant that they had a challenge with giving prices per kgs and they didn't have packaging for the vegetables

2. Distributions

Immediate aid was recommended for the identified families, these were households that are not able to access government aid, unemployed widows and single mothers with a large number of children to take care of with a basic social support grant from government, child headed families the elderly and the physically challenged.

This was communicated to all Siyanqoba members who shared lists from their local municipality. Initially 3 Municipalities were to receive the fresh produce: Impendle; Mkhambathini and Richmond. Mkhambathini and Richmond were fortunate enough to receive and I excluded Impendle for two reasons, the distance was too far for delivering 3 to 4 households and they had been fortunate since ward one has received food parcels two times, if not three times, during the Lockdown.

A personal observation, it seemed odd that the list of farms had almost all households included and this raised a concern for me because I found it hard to believe that everyone in the farm qualified.

Personal Highlights

All beneficiaries were women mid-twenties to late fifties.

Once it was shared that only 10 households will be receiving fresh produce, from the list shared I included another factor for identification, that was households that didn't have electricity because I saw the Wonder bags. Most of those that received didn't have electricity.

I think it is very important that this be shared as it brings life and meaning to the whole project. The women in the photo above who received fresh produce lives with grandchildren and those children don't receive child support grants. Her daughters for some reason don't take care of her but bring their small born kids to be raised by her. She often requests for food in the neighbouring farm. On the day of the

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delivery, she practically fell into tears and said “Thank you Jesus for not forsaking me and my family” and she started praying and kneeled down to our knees and cried.

Two of Siyanqoba households (one QM member and one Siyanqoba member) received the fresh produce, they both qualified.

I would like a constructive insight on what defines a farm, what defines Siyanqoba community reps. The reason I share this is because I found out that Siyanqoba members live, I will try to share a picture of the place without putting a name to it, in areas where there is a land owner and the land owner has some farming activities, in areas where there is a land owner who doesn't do agricultural activities, in areas that once had a land owner- there is no farming activity happening and surrounding areas have land owners who do farming activities, in areas where they have received land through land reform processes, in areas that once had a land owner and farming activities- currently no land owner and no farming activities and surrounding areas are ruled by Amakhosi, in an area that was once owned by a church and lastly in an area that looks like a skwatta camp and might have been owned by a land owner who did farming activities way back. The reason for asking clarity on what defines Siyanqoba is because some members previously lived on the farm and currently don't and some are officials (Government & Municipality). These two questions are elevated by the recent visits and some incidents following that.

What can be done differently?

Prior engagements with local Councillors with firm approach that doesn't allow politicalizing

Local network of farmers identified and they will need to work together so that they can produce varieties

For small procurements, there must be a centralized location for pick-up

Requesting in advance pictures of produce and ask if farmers have packaging

Collection of data to be done while you on the field

Internally, sharing activities so that whole team is aware

What worked?

The project itself

Involving CDWs and productive engagements with Siyanqoba

Collaborating with PACSA

The diverse team- echoed passion

AFRA being part of the initiative- supported our constituencies (need to collaborate more on small initiatives that give immediate results, not related to land, but related to other issues affecting the marginalized)