

An assessment of the Department of Water and Sanitation's Resource Poor Farmers' Funding Policy delivery model

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The South African government has undertaken massive reforms aiming to address rural poverty and inequalities inherited from the past apartheid regime.

South African rural communities have a way of dealing with their desperate situations. Perret et.al (2008) called it livelihood diversification—it is a strategy out of poverty towards resilience and sustainability. Farming is regarded as the main livelihood activity among rural communities.

Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) gives historically disadvantaged individuals access to land while Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) provides them with agricultural production support. Without access to sufficient water for both domestic and productive uses in and around the household, the rural poor and most vulnerable are excluded from options that would allow them to diversify and secure their sources of livelihoods and thus reduce their poverty level.

The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) offers resource poor farmers financial assistance towards purchasing irrigation infrastructure through the existing Resource Poor Farmers (RPF) policy and its implementation framework.

The financial assistance enables the resource poor farmers to purchase rainwater harvesting tanks and rehabilitation of irrigation water infrastructure such as canals, pipelines, lei dams and valves.

The study was undertaken to review the existing RPF policy in seven of the nine provinces of South Africa.

Application process

The overall study objective was aimed at enhancing accessibility of funds and relaxing the requirements in the application process for the historically disadvantaged individuals.

One of the specific objectives was to assess the application process that the respondents were subjected to when requesting funds towards purchasing irrigation

infrastructure.

A survey was conducted in seven provinces with the RPF policy beneficiaries. Key informants, who were policy implementers in the provinces were also interviewed. One-on-one interviews with beneficiaries and key informants (n=7) and focus groups interviews were used. A total of 62 beneficiaries were interviewed using a structured questionnaire.

Analysis

During the analysis, emphasis was put on the following variables: application process, application requirements, qualification criteria, policy products and services and activities around handling of an application form.

The findings of the assessment are as shown in the table below.

Based on the responses, some of conclusions and recommendations were drawn on how to improve the policy implementation.

Though the existing financial assistance model is marked with limitations as identified during

the study, more than 80 % of the respondents agreed to retain the application requirements but suggested that only critical requirements for qualification should be dealt with. Since turnaround time was not clear, it was suggested that it be seriously reviewed in view of DWS and CCAW's responsibility. RPF policy information is available mainly through DAFF, DWS and television, dissemination efforts should be increased as other resource poor farmers indicated that they were excluded.

It is recommended that the departments that have got interests towards the same clients should co-ordinate and align their support plans and specify as to who will assume primary and secondary roles.

Acknowledgements

The study was undertaken by the Agricultural Research Council officials on behalf of the Department of Water and Sanitation. It was fully funded by the Department of Water and Sanitation.

Variables	Survey results
Application process	No defined standard process to recommend or decline an application
Turnaround time	The turnaround time for the application process took long (2 years)
Institutional requirements	It was found that the process is largely bottle-necked by the Coordinating Committee on Agricultural Water (CCAW) which rarely meets or does not meet at all to deliberate on the applications
Application form	The application form should be amended e.g. a section that referred to 'particulars of the legal entity' be changed to 'particulars of an applicant'
Funding	During budget cuts, approved applications would not be funded
Stakeholders' support packages	Clients struggled to differentiate RPF policy support packages as similar products were offered by DAFF and DRDLR, e.g. rainwater harvesting tanks.

