

# Stimulation of Rural Enterprises in Zululand District

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**Abstract:** Rural enterprises are known for contributing to rural development because they can create job opportunities for rural people. There seem to be few rural enterprises that exist, and these rural enterprises seem to be unsustainable and are not contributing to rural development since acute poverty and high rate of unemployment still exist in rural areas. For rural enterprises to significantly contribute to rural development they need to be stimulated. This article focuses on how to stimulate rural enterprises in order for them to contribute to rural development in Zululand District Municipality. The study is qualitative and has utilised a purposive method was used to identify a sample that comprises twenty rural enterprises and twelve officials from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and Reform participated in the study. Data was collected using interview questions from rural enterprise owners about their participation in associations that help them grow their businesses and to determine how these government departments stimulate rural enterprises. Results revealed that both departments are focusing more on farming enterprises than on non-farming enterprises. The latter appears neglected even though the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform has formulated policies relevant to these enterprises. Policies and programmes directed at farming enterprises are more successful and organised and the opposite is true for non-farming enterprises. The government and non-government organisations should help both farming and non-farming rural enterprises to grow by facilitating and coordinating the formation and functioning of both farming and non-farming rural enterprise associations. The non-farming enterprises should also be given priority since they can employ people who could not be employed by farming enterprises.

**Keywords:** Farming Enterprises, Non-Farming Enterprises, Rural Development, South Africa

## Introduction

Rural enterprises are known to contribute to job creation. Research has shown that there are few registered rural enterprises and those that exist do not seem to contribute to rural development because acute poverty and high rate of unemployment still prevails in rural areas [1]. Therefore, there is a need for rural enterprises to be stimulated so that they can contribute to rural development. These rural enterprises include both farming enterprises and non-farming enterprises. [1] state that when the rural household's material living standard becomes better, they start to maximise their revenue by choosing higher income-yielding livelihood strategies which are non-farming types. In the same vein, [2] states that the factors that cause rural households to change to non-farming activities are the labour quality and quantity. Other factors that stimulate rural enterprises include the support given by the governments through policies and associations created to support these rural enterprises.

The need for rural enterprises to be supported in order for them to grow, be productive and contribute significantly to rural development is paramount [3]. Hence, [3] opines collaborative efforts from government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private sectors. [3] states that, in order to foster entrepreneurship development in rural areas certain measures are expected to be put in place. These measures include tax advantage, availability of cheap labour, advantages of local and regional resources, prestige and respect, competitive advantage over big businesses, support and motivation of local people, and advantage of forward and backward acceleration. Moreover, [4] suggests that the government and already established agricultural industry should support smallholder farmers. In the same vein [5]

states that protection and support need to be given to emerging commercial farmers. Support that should be given to these farmers includes access to land, mentorship by commercial farmers, market access, development of skills and development to funding, and tax and agro-processing incentives. Agriculture further needs to be linked with other sectors. An example is that agricultural surpluses must be used for agro-processing industries and eventually lead to industrial development. [6] also agree that smallholder farmers should be supported to make them productive. This can lead to food security. The government can further support smallholder farmers by linking them to national and international markets which will increase their production and raise their standard of living; introducing new marketing techniques that can increase sales; linkage of smallholder farmers to medium-sized processing enterprises to process agricultural products to increase family income; linkage of smallholder farmers with traders who will link them with national and international markets. [7] state that dysfunctional policies, among other things, are the reason for the poor performance of agricultural sector. [7] continues to state that this can be corrected by prioritising the implementation and enforcement of laws and regulations which are predictable and friendly to the private sector. [8] also, assert that it is important for policies that are aimed at stimulating rural transformation to take into consideration the heterogeneity of the non-farm sector otherwise these policies will disappoint.

Platforms and associations where young rural entrepreneurs can meet with old, experienced entrepreneurs for mentorship and interaction are important in stimulating rural enterprises. [9] assert that business growth is affected by a lack of support from business associations, consultants, and communities. In agreement [10] states that networking among rural businesses helps businesses to get advice, share information, and word of referral. However, there have been poor networking opportunities among the rural entrepreneurs which cause them not to benefit from what it can offer. [10] further opine that the lack of networking has led to a call for the formation of business networking platforms to expose rural enterprise operators to these benefits. [11] also state that formal gatherings can be used to promote newly established agribusinesses. These gatherings may take the form of farmer's day where stakeholders are invited, and experts share knowledge. Pamphlets can also be handed out which state the project that is being promoted. This can help consumers and investors of the project. In the same vein [12] states that to ensure the impact of trade on poverty and quality of life, ways of ensuring that agribusiness helps to create fair economic opportunities for those at the bottom of the economic pyramid have to be found. One of these ways based on their view, is inclusive agribusiness. Inclusive agribusiness involves the interaction of micro, small, medium, and large-scale business that operates across domestic, regional, and global markets which from a trade perspective is critical to realise. Furthermore, many business platforms have been established for the same purpose. These include the World Economic Forum which has Grow Africa and Grow Asia initiatives, and the Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (SAI) Platform. [12] continue to state that such support has also been given by multi-donor financing mechanisms and strategies such as the Global Agricultural and Food Security Programme (GAFSP) and the African Enterprise Challenge Fund.

Additionally, a study was conducted in Ghana where associations have been successfully established to stimulate rural enterprises. In their study [13] found that members of rural households belonged to at least one trade association. The trade associations are found in every rural community. They provide for the interest of their members in every livelihood base. Examples of these associations include food vendors' associations, Palm Produce Dealers' Associations (PPDA), Garri Processing and Marketers' Associations (GPMA), and Fish Dealer Association (FDA). These associations encourage economic prosperity and make useful information available to its members.

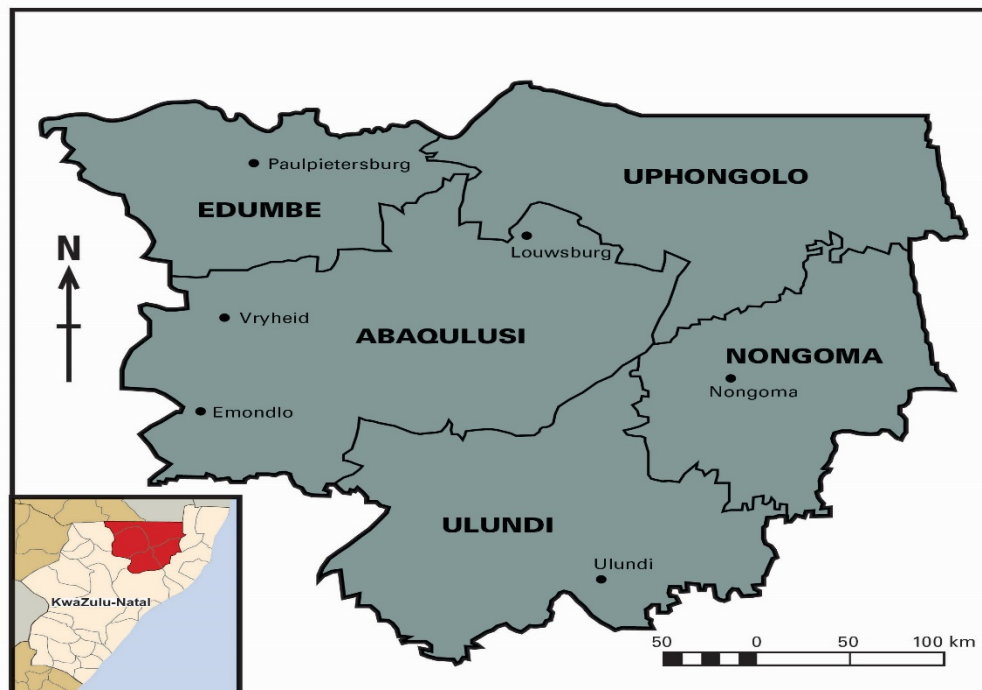
In the United Kingdom, there is an association for rural women entrepreneurship called Woman in Rural Enterprise (WiRE) [14]. This association has been successful in stimulating rural enterprises owned by rural women in this country. [14] states that WiRE was established after it was revealed through research that women are the drivers of rural entrepreneurship. WiRE was established to support these women. At the core of WiRE are objectives which are about mutual support, creating links, access to training, specialist expertise, and professional business support. WiRE creates forums where businesses come together to learn from each other, associate, collaborate, and innovate. This association is based at the university, and it links entrepreneurs with a resource of knowledge and expertise. It also helps individual businesses to take advantage of the latest technological developments.

In China, there is a good example of how government links smallholder farmers with medium-sized processing enterprises. This has stimulated rural enterprises both farm and non-farm tremendously. According to [15] in the area of her study in China, the agro-processing and marketing enterprises are called dragon head enterprises (DHEs). The DHEs that the author studied process manufacture instant sweet potato noodles. Each DHE is linked to a base of rural household sweet potato producers and processors in the villages around it. The DHE, producers, processors, and local government sign a contract where the obligations of each party are stated. The contract states the number and details of producers and processors. On the side of the local government, it states that it should ensure that production and processing meet the requirements of the DHE in terms of standard and quality; and ensure that households sell all their

products to the DHE and not in the market during the duration of the contract. Also, in the contract, it is stated that the DHE should give an improved variety of seeds and cultivation technique advice to producers; and provide processing equipment and technological training to processors. The duration of the contract is one year. After this, the producers and processors are free to sell to whomever they want but are not expected to return the seeds or the equipment. The training they get is a lifelong learning experience that will change their cultivation and processing for the better. Furthermore, this linkage of rural household producers and processors to the DHE has improved the income of farmers and processors because productivity has been improved. If this kind of linkage can be fostered between smallholder farmers and medium-sized processors with the cooperation of the bigger processing companies' rural enterprises

### Methodology

According to [16] KwaZulu Natal (KZN) has ten district municipalities and Zululand District Municipality (ZDM) is one of them located in northern part of Zululand. The population in this district municipality is sparsely dispersed over 14 810 km<sup>2</sup>. Almost half of this district is controlled by the traditional authorities and the other half comprises commercially owned farms and conservation areas. Most of the ZDM is rural with commercial farmland interspersed by protected areas, towns, and dense to scattered rural settlements within traditional authority areas. These are the towns and local municipalities that form part of the district, as shown in Fig.1: eDumbe, Abaqulusi, Nongoma, Pongola, and Ulundi.



**Figure 1: Zululand District Municipality Map**

Source: <https://municipalities.co.za/map125/Zululand-district-municipality>

ZDM has a population of 964 005 and 74.6 % of the people live in rural areas. The rest reside in urban and/or peri-urban areas [16]. There is a high rate of unemployment and poverty and, as such, the Zululand District Municipality has been singled out as a Nodal Point. The municipality is isolated from the national economy mainly due to its location of transport and distance from major centres. The traditional areas are characterised by poverty, and they depend upon the little economic output that is generated in the towns that are within the district [16].

The study was conducted using a qualitative design. The target population included non-farming and farming rural enterprises found in and operating in the rural areas of the five local municipalities in ZDM. Many of the rural enterprises in this district are not registered as a result their exact number is unknown. According to [17] there was an

estimation of 800 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in KZN as indicated in the KZN Youth Biz Database. However, the KZN Youth Business Directory showed that there are only 16 SMEs in ZDM 18].

This directory did not give clarity if these SMEs were in rural or urban areas. It was therefore clear to the researcher that this database was not reliable. The researcher then decided not to use this database. Instead, the researcher sought assistance from the traditional leaders, members of the community, and officials from the Department of Agriculture to locate farming and non-farming enterprises. Included in the sample were 20 rural enterprises and 17 officials from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and Reform.

The researcher collected data from one local municipality until the saturation point was reached and continued to the next local municipality within ZDM. According to [19] when conducting qualitative research, the occurrence of saturation determines the size of the sample. Furthermore, saturation occurs when new data that is collected from new participants does not add to the codes or themes that have been developed. This point indicates that the researcher should stop collecting data. Snowball sampling methods were used to get participants.

Interview questions were used to collect data from the participants. The researcher compiled questions in English and a professional translator translated them into Zulu. The participants were then asked question in Zulu by the researcher. The responses were written down in Zulu and later translated into English. also recorded by a voice recorder. The responses were recorded by a voice recorder and written down in Zulu and later translated into English during transcription. Data was analysed using content analysis.

## **Results and discussion**

The results discuss the outcome of the interviews of 20 owners of the rural enterprises and 17 officials from the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform in Zululand District Municipality. The results are presented below.

In this section, the researcher attempted to find out how rural enterprises are stimulated by institutional departments in government and/or any other organisation to grow and play a significant role in the rural development of the areas in which they are situated.

### **Contribution by owners of rural enterprise**

This section will discuss the stimulation of rural enterprises by farming or non-farming enterprise associations.

#### **Distribution of participants according to their membership in any farming or non-farming association.**

Is there any association involved in farming activities or non-farming activities that the participants are members of which can help stimulate the growth of their enterprises? Half of the participants were members of an association. When asked to explain the relevant existing association to which they belong, this is what participant 13 had to say:

*“There is an association here at Ebaqulusini. It is called Agri-forum. We meet two or three times a week. It was initiated by new emerging farmers and also helped by the Department of Agriculture.”*

Participant 14 added that:

*“There is Thubelihle association. It’s an association of co-operatives who are farmers.”*

This finding is in contrast with the results of the study conducted by [13] in Nigeria who found that members of rural households belonged to at least one trade association which encourages economic prosperity and makes useful information available to its members. The associations also provide for the interest of their members in every livelihood base. [20] also, state that there are 7000 Farmer Producer Organisations in India whose membership is mainly smallholder farmers and marginalised farmers.

#### **Distribution of participants according to the kind of support that the association in which the participants are members give to their members.**

This is an open-ended question that seeks to find out the kind of support the association gives to its members to stimulate their growth. 11 participants did not belong to any association, so they had nothing to say about the support that any association gives, one percent belonged to an association called Nkasi which supports its members by looking at markets and one percent belonged to a well-developed farmer’s association called Agri-forum. This association supported its members by sharing information, advice, and best farming practices. This is what participant 13 had to say about the support Agri-forum gives to its members:

*“We share information about which crop should be planted in that year looking at the weather. We also look at which crop produce more profit per ton. We also give each other advises and show each other successful ways of planting vegetables and share best farming practices. At time we combine or produce in order to get a bigger market because we are unable to get a market when we sell in small town.”*

This finding agrees with the work of [14] in the United Kingdom which revealed that Woman in Rural Enterprise (WiRE), which is an association for women with rural enterprises in the United Kingdom, created forums where businesses came together to learn from each other, associate, collaborate and innovate. Whereas [19] states that in India a group of farmers form a Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO). The main function of these FPOs is to expose the problems and issues faced by farmers.

### **Contribution by government officials**

The stimulation of rural enterprises by government departments is discussed in this section

### **Distribution of participants according to their knowledge of the policy that has been developed to help rural farmers and non-farming enterprises.**

This question was asked to find out if the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform have developed any policy that will help in stimulating non-farming and farming activities. The results show that 15 participants knew policies that have been developed to help farming and non-farming enterprises. When asked to explain this participant 7 who is an official from the Department of Agriculture had to say:

*“In terms of policies I know that there are policies developed by both Department of Agriculture and Department of Rural Development and Land Reform. The main policy extracted from the National Development Plan is about the agri-parks. The Department of Agriculture has developed a policy for food security, for the development of farmers and for supporting farmers in crop productions and animal production and all other commodities with the aim of establishing complete value chains. There are policies also that seek to empower farmers at commercial level where farmers are given half of the grand and they also contribute the other half.”*

Participant 9 who is an official from the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform alluded that:

*“There are policies I know of provincially. Rural enterprise development does not discriminate. It looks at both agricultural and non-agricultural activities. Non-agricultural activities are also not limited as long as that activity contributes in empowering people. The department supports people who are doing arts and craft, making building blocks or any non-agricultural projects. There is only one policy for both activities.”*

This finding concurs with the results of the study conducted by [21] among the European countries that are part of the European Union which revealed that in Europe rural enterprises are supported through different mechanisms. One of those mechanisms includes the rural development policy which is implemented through rural development programmes. According to [22] national governance needs to collaborate with international organisations, share experiences, ideas, and formulate better policies that are evidence-based.

### **Distribution of participants according to training/workshop they have attended of these policies.**

Officials were asked if they received training that made them to understand their responsibilities based on the policies that have been developed for rural enterprises. Seventy-one percent of participants had received training or attended workshops where policies and responsibilities were explained to them. This is how participant 7 who is a manager in the Department of Agriculture in one of the municipalities replied:

*“We (managers) are part of the development of these policies as managers. Our input is required.”*

Then participant 13 an advisor in the Department of Agriculture had to say:

*“We were called to the head office at Cedara to be told about this new policy (New Agrarian Strategy or Policy).”*

Participant 3 an advisor in the Department of Agriculture added that:

*“We get trainings on how to write business plans. There is also a department’s green book which has different courses one can attend.”*

This finding is in contrast with the study conducted by [23] in Muyexe in Limpopo which revealed that the pilot project of the Comprehensive Rural Development Policy (CRDP) failed because the officials did not understand the strategy very well and were not sure about their roles. However, the finding of the current study shows that officials

are trained and attend workshops. [24] assert that to stimulate the income of the smallholder farmers, governments, policymakers, and other relevant agencies need to provide the farmers with affordable credit, and quality education and deploy more agricultural extension agents to rural areas.

**Distribution of participants according to their knowledge of any support their department gives to rural enterprises both farming and non-farming.**

Do you receive any kind of support from the government through the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform given to rural enterprises? All of the participants knew about the support given to the rural enterprises by their departments. When asked to explain, participant 9 an official from the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform had to say:

*“Together with the Department of Agriculture we help people. Department of Agriculture help them with the expertise and we help them with the required funding for those having agricultural projects. If people want to do livestock farming, we refer them to the Department of Agriculture who help them with developing a business plan because a business plan is important for the sustainability of the project. In the business plan you can tell if the project will help people develop because we measure the sustainability of the project. We look at whether they have the market for their products, do they have the capacity to do that project. For those who do non-agricultural activities we help them register co-operatives and start work. We outsource training for them. Recently we trained a group of old ladies who were doing craft on co-operative governance. Once they are trained we register them as a cooperative. Then we outsource training for people who do craft like working with beads. The Department has a shop in Durban where what was produced during training is sold. The shop is run by the department. We always encourage people to form co-operatives. We only assist individuals by giving them advises. The department can also assist an individual to buy a farm if they have the capacity for farming.”*

Then participant 15, an official in the Department of Agriculture, added that”

*“The support given to farmers is divided into three categories. The first assistance we give is extension support because we give advice to farmers. Secondly we assist farmers to access funding by helping them write business plans. We have different experts like economists and scientists who are experts in different fields like horticulture crops, livestock etc. We also give mentorship to farmers through project management. We also give training. We organise training through Owen Sithole Agricultural College. We have commercial farmers and small-holder farmers and each have their own packages.”*

This finding agrees with the work of [25] in Eastern Cape which revealed that the farmers in the project were helped by the extension officer from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and Land Reform.

**Distribution of participants according to their knowledge of any association for farming and non-farming enterprises initiated by the government.**

This question was asked to find out if there is any association that the government has helped the farmers to initiate which helps in stimulating the rural enterprises. The result shows that 76% of the participants knew of the existence of the associations of farming. Participant 7 explained by saying:

*“There are committees that have been formed aligned to the agri-park programme. There is a District Agri-park Management Council which is called DAMS. It is made out of all agricultural stakeholders which include unions, associations, youth and women groups, farm dwellers, disabled people etc. This committee is initiated by government. Women in Agriculture and Rural Development is another initiative of government and Youth in Agriculture and Rural Development.”*

Then participant 12 added that:

*“We help farmers to form associations. We have secondary co-operatives which are here at eDumbe. There will be a tertiary co-operative that will combine eDumbe and Abaqulusi secondary co-operatives. We encourage farmer to participate in these organisation.”*

Participant 15 elaborated that:

*“Government encourages farmers to form associations themselves. These associations are formed not by government. There is a livestock association which promotes auction sales, deals with controlling of diseases. There is also a community investment where farmers are assisted to build infrastructure like boreholes, deep tanks etc. There is Poultry Association, Local Farmers Association (LFA). Farmers have ownership of these programmes. They are able*

to give direction to the department about what they need. The department does not think for them. They also indicate what interventions they need from the department and how it should be done. We do not farm for farmers they farm for themselves. They also arrange farmer's day where they showcase their work. They also give feedback on how they were helped by the department so that we as the department can also improve."

This finding is in agreement with the results of the study conducted by Gibb [14] in the United Kingdom which revealed that WiRE was an association initiated by rural enterprise owners in the United Kingdom who volunteered their time to set up and co-ordinate a network of local businesswomen.

## Conclusion

In this article, the results revealed that half of the rural enterprise owners belonged to various associations while the other half did not belong to any association. Most participants had nothing to say about the support given by these associations since they did not belong to any association. Most officials knew policies that had been developed to help farming and non-farming enterprises. They had received training and attended workshops where policies and responsibilities were explained to them. They knew the support given to the rural enterprises by their departments. They knew of the existence of the associations of farming enterprises. The results of this study will be useful to policymakers when formulating policies on the stimulation of rural enterprises because the importance of forming associations for non-farming and farming enterprises has been revealed. Future research should focus on reasons that cause non-farming enterprises to fail to form their association. Another focus of future research should be on factors leading to poor participation of enterprise owners in associations that will help their businesses.

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