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Does gender affect communal land access and success in farm-income and household food security?

Thapelo J Mothae

University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Smallholder farmers have been key custodians of most African nation's food and nutrition security, yet they are challenged by several factors including lack of access to land, access to credit and access to formal markets. Women smallholder farmers are the most affected due to the patrilineal nature of communal land allocation in most rural societies. However, women smallholder farmers continue to produce food for their households and earn income for their livelihoods. This study assessed the relationship between gender and communal land access and how they collectively impact on smallholder farmers' access to markets. A sample of 135 households was selected purposively in Appelsbosch, KwaZulu-Natal province in South Africa. The mixed methods approach of research was used. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics in SPSS and content analysis. The results indicated that women land rights were mostly secondary and land access was closely linked to relationship with male relatives through marriage ties. The study also found that smallholder farmers faced numerous challenges in terms of accessing land and markets therefore, more equitable measures for secure land rights, improvement in extension services, and creation of engendered and stable markets for smallholder farmers were recommended.

mothae.mothae@gmail.com

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