

Public-Private Pathways To Grow Emerging Farmer Entrepreneurship Within The North West Province, South Africa

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Abstract— Background - Entrepreneurship is central to agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods, yet South Africa's emerging farmers continue to face binding constraints—market access, skills, finance, and extension capacity—that limit commercialisation and scale.

Purpose - This paper proposes and tests a practical success framework to strengthen emerging farmer entrepreneurship and commercial readiness.

Method - Using an explanatory mixed-methods design, we first surveyed 410 emerging farmers and 500 commercial farmers to quantify gaps in markets, equipment, support services, and managerial/technical skills. Follow-up interviews with four senior informants (government, co-ops, black commercial farmers) were used to explain and contextualise the quantitative results.

Findings - Commercial farmers benefit from stronger links with market agencies, better-equipped operations, and more frequent engagement with agricultural co-operatives and private technical support. Emerging farmers report deficits in financial resources, technical knowledge, and managerial skills, and remain concentrated in informal markets. Qualitative evidence highlights selection weaknesses and limited after-care in support programmes, alongside latent willingness from private actors to co-invest in training, market linkage, and mentoring.

Contribution - Synthesising our evidence with recent literature, we propose a capability-driven framework anchored in four levers: (1) targeted capability building (financial, technical, and market skills), (2) structured market access pathways (including NFPMs, buyers, and processors), (3) blended finance with performance-based milestones, and (4) accountable public-private delivery partnerships. Recent studies on entrepreneurship drivers, extension capacity, smallholder market access, and conditional-grant performance corroborate the framework's focus and feasibility. Managerial implications - Provincial departments and agricultural co-operatives can operationalise the framework through jointly governed pipelines that (a) select committed candidates, (b) provide sequenced capability sprints, (c) guarantee defined market routes, and (d) release finance against verified milestones.

Keywords— Agricultural Development, Capability Building, Emerging Farmer Entrepreneurship, Market Access.

I. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture remains pivotal to global and national economic growth, poverty alleviation, and sustainable development [1], [2]. Despite global economic uncertainty and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, South Africa's agricultural sector demonstrated remarkable resilience—recording a 28.6 percent growth and becoming the best-performing sector in the second quarter of 2020 [3]. According to Statistics South Africa [4], the product price index (PPI) for agriculture, forestry, and fishing increased by 11.3 percent in January 2021, compared with 9.1 percent in December 2020, reflecting continued sectoral recovery and contribution to GDP.

However, challenges in agricultural productivity and inclusion persist. Agriculture is a lifeline for millions of people globally and remains crucial for eradicating poverty and hunger [5] - [7]. Recent reports from FAO [8] and OECD [9] highlight that agricultural innovation and entrepreneurship are now central to addressing global food insecurity, climate change adaptation, and rural unemployment—especially across sub-Saharan Africa.

Applying entrepreneurial principles and practices to farming has thus become a necessity rather than a choice [10]. The concept of agricultural entrepreneurship—or agricultural entrepreneurship—has gained traction as a means of strengthening competitiveness, increasing farm productivity, and enhancing farmer resilience [11], [12]. Policymakers are therefore urged to build enabling ecosystems that integrate entrepreneurial performance, innovation capacity, and institutional support [13], [14].

In the South African context, emerging farmers are positioned as key agents in transforming agriculture into a more inclusive, market-driven, and commercially sustainable sector [15]. Yet, despite numerous government interventions—such as the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) and the Recapitalisation and Development Programme—many support efforts remain ineffective due to weak beneficiary selection, limited monitoring, and insufficient post-investment support [16], [17]. These shortcomings have constrained the objective of improving entrepreneurial skills, managerial capacity, and market readiness among emerging farmers [18].

Recent studies stress the need to strengthen business management training and tailor support programmes to the heterogeneous needs of emerging farmers [19], [20]. Improved access to markets, finance, and value-chain integration is essential to transform small-scale farmers into viable agribusinesses capable of sustaining profits and generating employment [21].

Agriculture continues to dominate global land-use decisions [22] and remains a foundation for food security, poverty reduction, and rural development [23], [24]. Yet, as FAO [8] cautions, subsistence farming can no longer meet the growing food demand of rapidly urbanising populations. To close this gap, emerging farmers must transition from survival-based farming to market-oriented entrepreneurship through structured capability development, access to finance, and effective institutional collaboration [25].

Accordingly, this study aims to develop and propose a Success Framework to Improve Emerging Farmer Entrepreneurship in South Africa. The framework focuses on four critical levers identified through empirical research—capability development, market access, financial readiness, and institutional collaboration—to enhance sustainability, profitability, and scalability within the emerging farmer ecosystem.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Agriculture remains one of South Africa's key economic drivers, yet the potential of emerging farmers to contribute to inclusive growth, food security, and employment creation remains under-realised. Despite decades of state intervention—through programmes such as the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP), the Recapitalisation and Development Programme, and numerous provincial initiatives—outcomes have been mixed. Persistent weaknesses include limited entrepreneurial capability, inadequate business management training, and ineffective market integration [3], [25], [26].

Research consistently reveals that emerging farmers face constraints that impede their commercial viability. These include lack of access to finance, poor infrastructure, limited technical expertise, and weak institutional coordination [12], [13], [24]. The absence of sustainable mentorship and after-care support after initial funding further exacerbates the failure of many projects to transition beyond subsistence levels [14].

Globally, agricultural entrepreneurship is recognised as a crucial mechanism for enhancing resilience, innovation, and rural transformation [2]. Yet, in South Africa, most emerging farmers continue to rely heavily on state assistance rather than developing self-sustaining business models [18]. The resulting dependency undermines competitiveness and contributes to high attrition rates among smallholder initiatives.

Moreover, food security in sub-Saharan Africa remains fragile, with rising demand and climatic uncertainty amplifying the urgency to professionalise farming practices [6], [8]. To address these challenges, there is a growing consensus that agricultural support must evolve from subsidy-driven assistance to capability- and market-driven entrepreneurship development [20] [21].

Therefore, a strategic success framework is required—one that integrates capability building, financial readiness, market access, and institutional collaboration—to enable emerging farmers to become sustainable Small, Medium, and Micro-Enterprise (SMME) participants in the agricultural value chain. This study responds to that gap by empirically identifying the factors that determine success and by proposing a practical, evidence-based framework to enhance emerging farmer entrepreneurship in South Africa.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The overall purpose of this study is to identify and propose a success framework to improve emerging farmer entrepreneurship in South Africa.

A. Primary Objective

- To develop a framework that enhances the success and sustainability of emerging farmer entrepreneurship through improved capability development, access to finance, and market integration.

B. Secondary Objectives

- To assess the current entrepreneurial capacity and business management skills of emerging farmers in South Africa.
- To examine the extent to which government support programmes address the real needs of emerging farmers and contribute to their commercialisation.
- To formulate a success framework integrating public-sector support, private-sector participation, and capacity-building initiatives to strengthen emerging farmer entrepreneurship.

IV. LITERATURE TO SUPPORT THE PROBLEM

A. Development of Entrepreneurs in the Agricultural Industry

According to Dias [10] and Fitz-Koch [34], research on agricultural entrepreneurship has been comparatively limited when contrasted with other industries. However, in the past five years, interest in the topic has increased considerably as governments and researchers recognise the role of entrepreneurship in revitalising rural economies and ensuring food security [8], [12], [27].

Entrepreneurial skills among smallholder farmers in Nigeria were influenced by farm size, training, and extension visits—factors equally relevant in the South African context. Similarly, barriers to entrepreneurship among smallholder farmers such as inadequate resources, weak markets, and limited financial management competencies. Recent studies in South Africa confirm that entrepreneurial orientation and capability building remain decisive factors in transitioning emerging farmers from subsistence to commercial production [13], [14].

Since 1994, South Africa's land-reform programme has sought to redress inequality, yet it remains criticised for limited productive outcomes. Lahiff [28] found that only five percent of white-owned land had been redistributed, with little impact on output. Contemporary evaluations reveal persistent weaknesses, including poor project selection, inadequate financial management, and limited post-settlement support [44]. Van Burick [33] further emphasised the lack of access to capital, credit, and managerial training among black entrepreneurs. These structural issues continue to undermine the development of a robust entrepreneurial class in agriculture [20].

Land ownership remains a critical determinant of investment and productivity. Farmers who operate on leased or communal land often hesitate to make long-term investments in infrastructure or technology due to tenure insecurity [25], [32]. Conversely, secure land rights coupled with technical support have been linked to higher productivity and innovation [24].

Zantsi [15] highlight the transformative potential of emerging farmers in contributing to rural economies, provided that enabling ecosystems are strengthened. Newer scholarship aligns with this argument, stressing that targeted business-management training, digital-agriculture adoption, and access to finance are pivotal for the sustainability of emerging farming enterprises [6], [12].

B. The Development of Agricultural Entrepreneurship in Neighbouring Countries

1) Agricultural Entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe

The development of agricultural entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe began in 1980 following independence, with an ambitious national resettlement and land redistribution programme. Initially, approximately 70 000 families were resettled by 1999, well below the target of 162 000 households [13], [45]. Land reform became a key political issue, especially during the 1996 presidential and 2000 parliamentary elections, where its slow progress was publicly criticised.

Prime Minister Robert Mugabe's administration launched the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) in 2000, aiming to correct colonial land ownership imbalances and promote

equitable access to land. The reforms led to a significant increase in the number of small-scale black farmers who obtained access to productive land (Moyo, 2009). While this initiative marked a major step toward agricultural self-sufficiency, it was also characterised by policy inconsistency, limited institutional capacity, and reduced private-sector participation, which collectively constrained productivity growth [29] [46].

According to the African Development Bank (2024), Zimbabwe's post-reform agricultural sector remains dominated by smallholders with limited access to finance, mechanisation, and formal markets. Nevertheless, some progress has been recorded in contract farming models and public-private extension services, which link smallholders to agro-processors and input suppliers. The FAO [8] notes that Zimbabwe's agri-entrepreneurship recovery requires stronger market linkages, value addition, and climate-resilient practices to rebuild productivity and investor confidence.

Recent evidence [30] indicates that community cooperatives, blended finance schemes, and mentorship programmes have begun to fill the institutional gaps left by government interventions. However, land tenure insecurity and weak credit systems remain key obstacles to the emergence of commercially viable black-owned agribusinesses. Gumede [46] warns that South Africa should draw lessons from Zimbabwe's populist-based land reform, which, while redistributive, undermined investor certainty and the sustainability of entrepreneurial farming.

2) Agricultural Entrepreneurship in Namibia

Following Namibia's independence in 1990, the government introduced two major land reform initiatives: the Resettlement Programme and the Affirmative Action Loan Scheme (AALS) [32]. The Resettlement Programme sought to enhance food security, self-employment, and profit generation among landless Namibians, promoting smallholder participation in the open market. However, many resettlement projects remained dependent on government support for food, drought relief, and technical assistance, which constrained their self-sufficiency (Odendaal, 2005).

The AALS was established to facilitate the acquisition of commercial farmland by black farmers through subsidised loans, interest rate concessions, and government guarantees. By 2018, the scheme had transferred approximately 3.4 million hectares of farmland to previously disadvantaged Namibians [47]. Nonetheless, repayment challenges persisted—63 percent of beneficiaries were unable to meet loan obligations in 2004—prompting revisions such as reducing the repayment term to 33 years and setting interest rates at 2 percent [47].

The Revised National Resettlement Policy (2018–2027) reaffirmed Namibia's vision of equitable and transparent land distribution while promoting sustainable land utilisation (Ministry of Lands and Resettlement, 2018). However, recent reviews [24], [25] highlight persistent weaknesses in managerial capacity, monitoring systems, and entrepreneurial training. Without robust business skills and technical support, many beneficiaries struggle to maintain production levels, profitability, and repayment compliance.

Comparative regional analyses suggest that Namibia's future agricultural transformation depends on building entrepreneurial capacity, expanding access to blended finance, and enhancing youth and women's participation in commercial agriculture. Integration into regional value chains under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) framework offers opportunities to commercialise smallholder production and strengthen food systems resilience.

3) Regional Synthesis

Across southern Africa, experiences from Zimbabwe and Namibia demonstrate that land redistribution alone does not ensure successful agricultural entrepreneurship. Sustained support through capability building, access to finance, secure tenure, and market-oriented production is essential. The African Development Bank [24] advocate for hybrid models combining state facilitation with private investment and cooperative organisation.

For South Africa, the key lesson is that transformation policies must balance equity and efficiency—promoting inclusive ownership while ensuring that emerging farmers are equipped with managerial skills, market access, and innovation capacity to operate as competitive SMMes in the agricultural value chain [44]. Emerging farmers

TABLE I META-ANALYSIS: DEFINITIONS OF EMERGING FARMERS

Source	Definition
[15]	Emerging farmers produce mainly to improve household food security, but often engage in small-scale market participation.
[44]	Defines emerging farmers as previously marginalised producers in transition from subsistence to market-oriented farming, characterised by partial asset ownership, semi-commercial production, and reliance on state or donor support.
[12]	Identifies emerging farmers as “new-generation commercial entrants” who possess productive potential but require structured access to markets, finance, and business management capabilities to scale sustainably.
[13]	Describes emerging farmers as opportunity-driven entrepreneurs seeking to combine traditional knowledge with modern business practices to create livelihoods and employment in rural communities.
[21]	Defines emerging farmers as land-reform beneficiaries or smallholders participating in restitution projects who display entrepreneurial intent and pursue commercialisation through market and capacity support.
[14]	Characterises emerging farmers as semi-commercial producers integrated into private-sector investment schemes that provide credit, training, and market access to facilitate upward mobility into formal value chains.

Across these studies, there is a broad consensus that emerging farmers represent a transitional group situated between subsistence and fully commercial agriculture. All the definitions recognise that these farmers possess productive potential but remain constrained by limited resources, including access to markets, finance, land, and technical capacity.

1) Support Services

TABLE 2 META-ANALYSIS: SUPPORT SERVICES

Source	Definition
[35]	Approximately 50% of emerging farmers completely lack awareness of the support services and projects in South Africa.
[36]	In South Africa the government provide relevant support services to improve agricultural production and finally to improve livelihoods of farmers and the growth of the economy.
[13]	Many emerging farmers face limited access to training, mentorship, and extension services due to inadequate outreach capacity and weak collaboration between public and private institutions.
[12]	Argues that support programmes often emphasise funding without sufficient attention to entrepreneurial and managerial training, leading to poor project sustainability.
[20]	Reports that less than 30% of smallholders access formal market or extension support; calls for integrated “market access incubators” linking farmers with buyers, finance, and logistics networks

Support services form the backbone of agricultural transformation and directly affect the productivity and sustainability of emerging farmers. Yet numerous studies indicate that South African support systems remain fragmented and unevenly distributed [26], [35]. McAllister (2018) observed that approximately half of emerging farmers were unaware of the support projects available to them, pointing to poor communication and outreach. Arinloye [37] found that only 26.7 percent of smallholders knew about financial support mechanisms, while Bitzer and Bijman [38] reported that outdated technology adoption limited production efficiency.

More recent evidence highlights persistent capability gaps in entrepreneurship, business planning, and management. Ndlovu, Kruger and Meyer [13] identify a shortage of mentorship and extension services due to overstretched provincial resources and weak collaboration between government and private actors. Van Niekerk [12] argues that support programmes often emphasise financial aid but neglect managerial training, leading to unsustainable enterprises. The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation [26] similarly found that CASP projects with embedded mentorship and after-care performed significantly better than those offering once-off funding.

Globally, the Food and Agriculture Organisation [8] and African Development Bank [24] advocate hybrid support systems—combining public extension networks with private digital platforms and technical partnerships—to enhance innovation diffusion. In this context, public-private support ecosystems are crucial to transform emerging farmers into capable agricultural entrepreneurs.

All the cited studies agree that support services for emerging farmers in South Africa are inadequate, fragmented, and poorly coordinated. While Tibesigwa and Visser [36] acknowledge that government programmes exist to enhance productivity and livelihoods, the other sources highlight serious gaps in awareness, accessibility, and effectiveness.

2) Poverty Alleviation and Inclusive Growth

Agricultural entrepreneurship contributes directly to poverty reduction through income generation, employment creation, and local value-addition. Christiaensen and Martin [24] demonstrate that agriculture-led growth is two to three times more effective at reducing poverty than growth in other sectors. In South Africa, emerging farmers can play a pivotal role in inclusive growth if systemic barriers are addressed.

Empirical work in Limpopo Province by Maesela [21] shows that entrepreneurial intent among restitution-project beneficiaries is linked to higher household incomes and improved local employment. Similarly, Mnikathi [14], reports that emerging farmers engaged in private investment schemes experience increased business turnover and community spill-over effects. These findings underscore the importance of shifting from welfare-based approaches to entrepreneurship-driven development, where emerging farmers are supported as business actors rather than passive beneficiaries.

Internationally, the AfDB [24] identifies agricultural entrepreneurship as a key driver of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 1 and 8), especially in reducing rural poverty and promoting decent work. However, sustainable poverty alleviation through agriculture requires integrated interventions that combine skills, finance, markets, and governance—the same levers central to public-private pathways.

3) Food Security and Sustainable Livelihoods

Food security remains a central objective of agricultural policy across Africa. The FAO [8] defines food security as physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food at all times. In most African economies, subsistence farming alone cannot meet rising food demand driven by population growth and urbanisation [7]. Emerging farmers are therefore critical intermediaries between smallholders and commercial producers, capable of expanding domestic supply and reducing dependence on imports [22].

Research shows a clear correlation between entrepreneurship and household food security. Zantsi et al. [15] found that emerging farmers typically produce to improve household food availability while gradually participating in local markets. Yet many remain vulnerable to climatic shocks, fluctuating input prices, and inconsistent market demand. Integrating these producers into stable value chains through public-private initiatives can stabilise incomes and ensure long-term food security [8].

The World Bank [39] emphasises that climate-smart agriculture and digital extension tools, when combined with PPPs, significantly improve productivity and resilience. This evidence supports the argument that food security is not only a production challenge but also an

entrepreneurial and institutional one, requiring multi-stakeholder collaboration to connect smallholders to technology, knowledge, and markets.

4) Public-Private Partnerships in Agricultural Development

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) have become a preferred mechanism to deliver complex agricultural programmes by combining public accountability with private efficiency [40], [48]. In emerging-farmer contexts, PPPs facilitate shared investment in infrastructure, input supply, processing facilities, and market access [8].

The theoretical rationale for PPPs lies in collaborative governance theory, which stresses co-design, co-implementation, and co-monitoring between sectors [49]. Empirical evidence from Kenya, Zambia, and South Africa indicates that blended public-private delivery produces higher adoption of technology and better access to finance compared with state-only initiatives [24]. In South Africa, the NAMC [20] advocates “market-access incubators” that integrate government extension, agribusiness investment, and cooperative aggregation.

Despite their promise, PPPs require sound institutional frameworks to avoid elite capture and ensure equitable benefit distribution. Success factors include transparency, clearly defined roles, and performance-based funding [25]. Consequently, PPPs are not merely funding mechanisms but pathways of institutional integration, linking public goals of equity and food security with private incentives for efficiency and profitability.

5) Selection and Empowerment of Capable Emerging Farmers

A recurring weakness in agricultural support programmes is the inadequate selection and preparation of beneficiaries. Many initiatives enrol farmers without assessing entrepreneurial orientation, business readiness, or market potential [28]. As a result, large numbers of projects fail to sustain operations beyond initial funding cycles.

Recent studies propose evidence-based selection frameworks focusing on capability, commitment, and scalability. Maesela [21] identifies entrepreneurial intent as the strongest predictor of success among land-reform beneficiaries. Similarly, Van Niekerk [12] describes “new-generation commercial farmers” as entrants who already demonstrate market awareness and a willingness to learn business management skills. The DPME [16] and GTAC [25] both recommend competency assessments before allocating grants.

International best practice shows that farmer-selection processes work best when combined with mentorship and incubation models, allowing participants to develop managerial skills while accessing production credit and market contracts. These findings suggest that capable farmer selection is the first stage of any sustainable public-private pathway.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology section presents the approach the study took to deal with the research problem, research questions and objectives of the study.

Research philosophy	Research design	Research methods	Target population	Sampling strategies
Pragmatism	Mixed method approach Explanatory design	Case study	1st target group – 410 emerging farmers: <i>quantitative method</i> 2nd target group – 500 commercial farmers: <i>quantitative method</i> 3rd target group – 4 selected individuals at institutions-interviews: <i>qualitative method</i>	1st target group – emerging farmers: <i>purposive sampling technique</i> 2nd target group – commercial farmers: <i>simple random sampling</i> 3rd target group – 4 selected individuals: <i>Judgement sampling and critical case sampling</i>

Fig. 1 The research process model employed in this study

This study was based on a mixed-method design, using both qualitative and quantitative research approaches and related methods to gather and analyses data in order to answer the research questions. Within this mixed-method design, the explanatory design (where the quantitative data are collected first and, depending on the results, qualitative data are gathered to explain the quantitative findings) was used.

Two self-administered questionnaires, comprising of a structured questionnaire (quantitative) and an unstructured questionnaire (qualitative), will be used to gather data from the sample group. The questionnaire (quantitative) was distributed to the emerging farmers to determine the factors that led to failures in agribusiness, and the same questionnaire was distributed to the commercial farmers to determine the factors that led to the success in agribusiness. Semi-structured interviews (qualitative) were also held with purposively selected individuals from the Department of Agriculture, agricultural corporations and black commercial farmers within the North-West province.

In this study, the case study approach was used for the reason that a specific case, namely an in-depth study, was done on the sustainability of emerging farmers in the North-West province. A case study can be defined as an intensive study about a person, a group of people or a unit, which is aimed at generalising over several units.

A. Population and sampling

The current study comprises three population groups, namely:

- 1st target group: emerging farmers (purposive sampling technique)
- 2nd target group: commercial farmers (simple random sampling)
- 3rd target group: selected individuals (judgement sampling and critical case sampling)

The first target population (emerging farmers) comprised 410 emerging farmers, where a quantitative research approach was implemented. A list of these emerging farmers (projects) was obtained from the Department of Agriculture in the North-West, and they are all registered with the Provincial Treasury as beneficiaries of these development Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme funds. A questionnaire was distributed to all 410 emerging farmers. This survey is “...the collection of a large quantity of evidence usually numeric, or evidence that will be converted to numbers, normally by means of a questionnaire” [41]. The total population sampling method was used for this target group. Total population sampling is a type of purposive sampling technique that involves examining the entire population.

The second target population (commercial farmers) comprised of 500 farmers, where a quantitative research approach was implemented. For this second target group, the probability sampling method was used. In particular, the simple random sampling was used, as it is the least sophisticated method of all sampling designs.

For the third target population, a qualitative research approach was implemented. Interviews were held with the representatives of the institutions mentioned earlier in the study. The non-probability sampling method was employed to draw a sample from these institutions and the specific technique regarded as appropriate is purposive sampling. Judgement sampling was employed in this study by the researcher for selecting sample members to confirm to the criterion. The managers employed by these institutions deal directly with agricultural development, which has all the information from the supplier of funds point of view as to why most emerging farmers are unsuccessful entrepreneurs. Participants were chosen on an arbitrary basis because of their unique knowledge (critical case sampling).

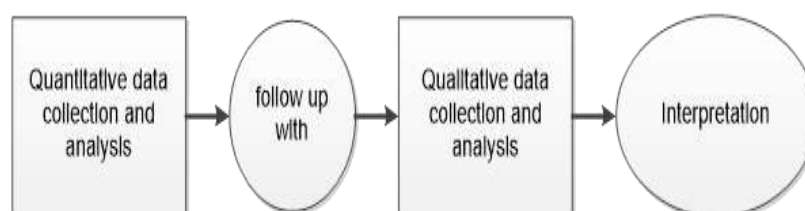


Fig. 2 The explanatory sequential design

Semi-structured interviews were held with a selected individual from the Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Cooperation's and black commercial farmers after the data collection of the questionnaires for the explanation of the quantitative findings.

VI. RESULTS

A. Quantitative research results

Table 3 provides the data of the number of questionnaires distributed as well as the number of usable questionnaires obtained after editing and coding.

TABLE 3 Response rate

Category	Questionnaire s distributed	Questionnaire s collected	Percentage
Emerging farmers	410	202	49%
Commercial farmers	500	268	54%

Table 3 provides the data on the number of questionnaires distributed as well as the number of usable questionnaires obtained after editing and coding.

- Emerging farmers:

410 questionnaires were distributed to emerging farmers, and only 202 could be collected, meaning a response rate of 49%.

- Commercial farmers:

500 questionnaires were distributed to commercial farmers, of which 268 were received back, meaning a response rate of 54%.

TABLE 4 Training in farming

	Emerging farmers		Commercial farmers	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	12	6	188	71
No	180	89	72	26
No response	10	5	8	3
Total	202	100	268	100

Emerging Farmers: 89% of the farmers did not receive any training in farming.

Commercial farmers: 71% of the farmers received training in farming, and 26% did not.

TABLE 5 NUMBER OF YEARS IN FARMING

	Emerging farmers		Commercial farmers	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
0-5 years	189	94	0	0
6-10 years	12	6	75	28
11+ years	0	0	185	69
No response	1	0	8	3
Total	202	100	268	100

Emerging Farmers: 94% of the farmers fall in the bracket of 0 – 5 years.

Commercial farmers: 69% of the farmers have been farming for 11 years or longer, and 28% for 6 - 10 years.

TABLE 6 SIZE OF THE GOVERNMENT GRANT

	Emerging farmers		Commercial farmers	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
R0	5	2	258	96
R1-R100 000	129	64	0	0
R100 001- R200 000	34	17	0	0
R200 001- R300 000	22	11	0	0
R300 001+	11	6	0	0
No response	1	0	10	4
Total	202	100	268	100

Emerging Farmers: 64% of the farmers did receive a government grant between R1 – R100 000 and 17% between R100 001 – R200 000.

Commercial farmers: 96% of the commercial farmers did not receive any grant although 4% did not respond on this question..

• EVALUATION OF THE EFFECT SIZE

Effect size is a simple way of quantifying the difference between two study populations (emerging and commercial farmers). Tests of statistical significance are not relevant when dealing with populations instead of random samples. Effect size emphasises the size of the difference (usually means), independent of the scale of measurement (e.g. a five-point scale). Coe [43] uses the following formula to calculate the effect size:

$$\text{Effect size} = \frac{\text{Mean of Group 1} - \text{Mean of Group 2}}{\text{Standard deviation}}$$

Mean is the arithmetical average of a set of scores. It is obtained by adding all the scores and dividing the sum by the number of scores.

Standard deviation (SD) is the measure of dispersion about the mean in the same units as the scores and is used to standardise the difference in group means. Since the two groups' SDs usually differ, the maximum of the two SDs is taken.

Cohen [42] also suggested criteria for evaluating the size of a treatment effect as follows:

d = 0.2 small effect (mean difference around 0.2 standard deviation)

d = 0.5 medium effect (mean difference around 0.5 standard deviation)

d = 0.8 large effect (mean difference around 0.8 standard deviation)

A five-point Likert scale to gather data from the farmers was used in this research. It usually entails the following format, according to Murry [50]:

TABLE 7 FIVE POINT SCALE

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

Source: [50]

TABLE 8 FIVE POINT SCALE

Not at all	Somewhat	Average	To a large extent	Absolutely
1	2	3	4	5

Source: [50]

TABLE 9 SUSTAINABLE MARKETS - EVALUATING THE EFFECT SIZE WITH COHEN'S DIVE POINT SCALE

	Commercial farmer		Emerging farmer		d
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	
Are you linked to market agencies?	1.71	0.455	1.01	0.211	1.5
Do you anticipate potential growth in your market?	4.71	0.465	2.00	0.234	5.8

- Is the farmer linked to market agencies?

The effect size with Cohen's d (1.5) on this question is large because emerging farmers are not linked to market agencies, while commercial farmers are.

- Is there any anticipated growth in the market for the product selling?

The effect size with Cohen's d (5.8) on this question is large because emerging farmers indicated somewhat growth in the market and most of the commercial farmers indicate an average growth rate in the market.

TABLE 10 SUSTAINABLE OPERATION ACTIVITIES - PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT - EVALUATING THE EFFECT SIZE WITH COHEN'S D

	Commercial farmer		Emerging farmer		d
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	
Are you assisted by computer technologies?	3.37	0.498	1.03	0.272	4.7
Are you linked with experts/ scientists?	4.01	0.844	1.04	0.336	3.5

- Are you connected with experts/scientists in the farming activities?

The effect size with Cohen's d on this question is large (3.5) because most of the commercial farmers indicated an average or, to a larger extent, connected to experts in the agricultural industry.

TABLE 11 ADEQUATE PRODUCTION INFRASTRUCTURE - EVALUATING THE EFFECT SIZE WITH COHEN'S D

	Commercial farmer		Emerging farmer		d
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	
Do you rent production infrastructure/buildings?	3.28	0.475	1.02	0.224	4.8
Does your business have adequate equipment for production purposes?	3.29	0.456	2.02	0.159	2.8

- Does your business have adequate equipment for production purposes?

The effect size with Cohen's d on this question is large (2.8) because most of the average commercial farmers have the equipment necessary in the production process, as compared to the emerging farmer.

TABLE 12 BUSINESS OPERATION - EVALUATING THE EFFECT SIZE WITH COHEN'S D

	Commercial farmer		Emerging farmer		d
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	
Do you have a management structure?	3.29	0.455	1.06	0.434	4.9

- Do you have a proper record system with a management structure?

The effect size with Cohen's d on this question has a medium effect (4.9) as most commercial and emerging farmers believe that they do have a proper record system and management structure in place.

TABLE 13 PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT - EVALUATING THE EFFECT SIZE WITH COHEN'S D

	Commercial farmer		Emerging farmer		d
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	
Do specialists/experts visit your business?	2.71	0.456	1.02	0.173	3.7
Do officials of the Department of Agriculture visit your business?	2.70	0.465	1.01	0.071	3.7
Do private sectors/co-operatives supply you with any support?	3.70	0.467	2.01	0.174	3.6

- Do private sectors/co-operatives provide you with any support?

The effect size with Cohen's d on this question is large (3.6) because the average commercial farmers ask for assistance of any support by agricultural co-operatives as compared with the emerging farmer.

TABLE 14 SOLUTIONS FOR IMPROVING FARMING OPERATIONS OF EMERGING FARMERS-EVALUATING THE EFFECT SIZE WITH COHEN'S D

	Commercial farmer		Emerging farmer		d
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	
Skills training (financial, farming and technical skills)	1.71	0.463	1.01	0.099	1.5

ECONOMICSECONOMICS• Skills training (financial-, farming and technical skills)

The effect size with Cohen's d on this question is large (1.5) because the emerging farmer thinks that financial-, farming- and technical skills are very important to improve management, although, both parties mentioned in the answer sheet either agree or strongly agree.

B. Qualitative research results

The third target population consists of selected individuals from the Department of Agriculture in the North-West province, agricultural corporations and black commercial farmers. A non-probability sampling method was employed to draw a sample from these institutions, and the specific technique regarded as appropriate is purposive sampling. Judgement sampling was employed in this study as managers employed by these institutions dealing directly with agricultural development.

TABLE 15 Composition of the sample

Institution	No of persons
Department of Agriculture in the North-West province	1
Agricultural corporations	1
Black commercial farmers	2

Interviews were held with four individuals, namely the Member of the Executive Council (MEC), who was at the time well known to the researcher because they worked together in the same Department of Agriculture. During that time, the researcher was reporting to the Chief Director Rural Development and on an ad-hoc basis to the MEC. The MEC is the person responsible for service delivery to the community in agriculture, therefore, responsible for a good performance in the department to achieve an unqualified audit report. For this to happen in the department, there should be a zero amount of irregular as well as fruitless and wasteful expenditure. Thus, the monies spent in the development of successful entrepreneurs in agriculture are crucial for increasing the food basket and the economic growth of the country.

Interviews were held with two black commercial farmers for their input to establish how to promote emerging farmers to successful entrepreneurs in agriculture. This was done to determine all the success factors that will contribute to the positive establishment of successful entrepreneurs in the agricultural industry.

Another interview was held with a senior manager from an agricultural cooperative to determine the input that the private industry wants to assist with in the creation of successful entrepreneurs in agriculture.

Each interview was recorded and transcribed. The written submissions of the four transcripts were emailed to an independent analyst for the analysis. The analysis was done in NVivo 12 Pro.

NVivo 12 Pro for Windows is an instrument to collect all the data needed. It contains the import, management and analysis text functions, as well as audio, video, emails, images, spreadsheets, online surveys, web content and social media. With NVivo, advanced data management, query and visualisation tools can be explored. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis (QDA) computer software package produced by QSR International. It has been designed for qualitative researchers working with very rich text-based and/or multimedia information, where deep levels of analysis on small or large volumes of data are required.

From the interviews, the following findings were made:

Project failure and lack of continuity:

- The Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) was ineffective due to various problems inherent to the program.

- Poor selection of recipients: During the interviews, it emerged that the participants felt that one of the major reasons for failure is choosing the wrong people and awarding farms to people with no passion or interest in farming. The recipients do not possess the knowledge or the skill, nor the passion to upskill and learn to become commercial farmers. Emerging farmers often assume that farming is a lucrative business and are not prepared for possible hardships. Thus, when things go wrong, they often sell their breeding stock or seeds that should have been planted, or selling off the tractors intended for farming.

- Inadequate government and department knowledge and assistance: Government lacks the knowledge and the skills to identify suitable candidates and advise them once selected. Furthermore, the government fails to provide the necessary training, support or any other appropriate intervention to see the projects to success.

- The key finding and the core of the result of this study is to empower and give skills to those emerging farmers who must become self-sustainable and independent commercial farmers.

Recommendations:

- The private institution (cooperations and other agricultural organisations) should join hands with the government in the training of emerging farmers to generate more successful entrepreneurs in agriculture.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRACTICAL MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

With the information gathered from the quantitative and qualitative research done, it is clear that the private organisations should and want to join hands with government in the development of emerging farmers. With this in mind, the external role players in agriculture, together with the government, should follow the aspects that should be highlighted towards the implementation of a framework in the development of emerging farmers:

- The importance of partnerships between the government and private Agribusiness (e.g. Senwes Cooperation, North-West Cooperation, Development Financial Institutions, Processing Companies, Marketing Institutions, Commercial farmers, etc.)
- Marketing channels need to be explored to ensure that the produce of emerging farmers is marketed properly.
- The role of research and partnership with universities is also critical in imparting and interpreting technical matters for emerging farmers.

A mentorship programme needs to be put in place, and partnerships with commercial farmers in a well-structured way should be established.

It is the researcher's aim to get a framework in place where both government and private agribusinesses could be involved in the development of successful emerging farmers.

The aim of the article is to develop successful entrepreneurs in agriculture. Within the government industry, cooperatives can be established as a vehicle where the private institutions and commercial farmers (who will be part of the board of such cooperatives) are involved in the training and selection process of emerging farmers to become successful entrepreneurs in agriculture.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how public-private collaboration can serve as a pathway for strengthening emerging farmer entrepreneurship in South Africa. Drawing on a mixed-methods approach involving 410 emerging farmers, 500 commercial farmers, and key informants from government and the private sector, the findings consistently highlight that while state interventions have expanded access to land and funding, most emerging farmers remain constrained by inadequate business capability, weak market integration, and limited post-funding support. Commercial farmers, by contrast, benefit from established market networks, continuous training, and closer engagement with co-operatives and private agribusinesses.

The evidence clearly demonstrates that government support alone is insufficient to transform emerging farmers into commercially viable enterprises. Sustainable entrepreneurship in agriculture depends on integrated, capability-driven partnerships that combine public-sector facilitation with private-sector efficiency, mentorship, and innovation. The study's proposed Success Framework identifies four strategic levers: (1) capability development through targeted training in financial, technical, and market skills; (2) structured market access pathways linking farmers to processors, co-operatives, and national fresh produce markets; (3) blended finance tied to performance-based milestones; and (4) accountable governance through public-private co-delivery structures.

Empirical findings from both quantitative and qualitative data reinforce these levers. Weak beneficiary selection and inadequate aftercare under the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) contribute to project failures, while private-sector players have expressed readiness to co-invest in mentorship, training, and market linkage. This confirms the need for a jointly governed implementation pipeline where the government identifies and supports capable farmers, private partners provide skills and technology transfer, and commercial farmers mentor entrants into sustainable value chains.

In conclusion, growing emerging farmer entrepreneurship in South Africa requires a paradigm shift from subsidy-driven support to partnership-based capability building. Public-private

pathways provide a viable mechanism to align resources, expertise, and accountability for inclusive agricultural growth. If implemented effectively, the proposed framework can strengthen food security, create employment, and position emerging farmers as key contributors to a competitive and sustainable agricultural economy.

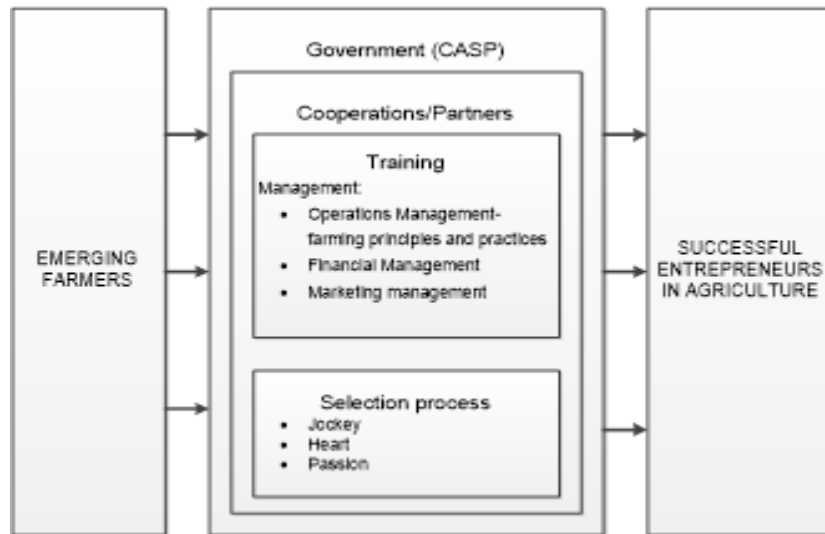


Fig 6: Key success factor framework to improve emerging farmer entrepreneurship

This study examined how public-private collaboration can strengthen emerging farmer entrepreneurship in South Africa and reduce the persistent high failure rate among government-supported agricultural projects. Drawing on mixed-methods data from 410 emerging farmers, 500 commercial farmers, and key informants from the Department of Agriculture and private agribusinesses, the findings clearly show that emerging farmers face multidimensional challenges—insufficient farming skills, limited access to finance, poor market integration, and inadequate extension and infrastructural support.

The evidence demonstrates that the high rate of failure among emerging farmers stems primarily from a lack of human capital, business planning, market access, and operational capacity. Developing farmer SMMEs require ongoing technical training, mentorship, access to formal markets, and financial readiness to manage their farms as sustainable businesses. The importance of structured business planning, continuous training, and strong market linkages was consistently emphasised by both quantitative and qualitative participants.

It is therefore evident that government-driven interventions alone are inadequate to ensure success. Sustainable transformation depends on the creation of public-private pathways that integrate the strengths of both sectors. The study's Success Framework proposes four key levers to achieve this: (1) capability development through targeted training and mentorship, (2) structured market access via co-operatives, processors, and buyers, (3) blended finance linked to performance milestones, and (4) accountable co-governance between public and private actors.

Based on these findings, it is proposed that the Department of Agriculture in the North West Province establishes a provincial public entity under Schedule 3, Part C of the Public Financial Management Act (PFMA) 1 of 1999 (as amended). This entity—jointly governed by government, private agribusinesses, and cooperatives—should oversee the selection, training, and monitoring of emerging farmers. The private sector should contribute expertise, funding, and training capacity while serving on the board of the institution.

It is recommended that this entity implement a three-year, South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) accredited on-the-job training programme designed to professionalise emerging farmers. During this period, trainees would receive structured mentorship, monitored quarterly by extension officers and independent evaluators. Non-performing participants would

be released from the programme, while successful candidates would graduate with practical experience, equity accumulation, and eligibility for participation in land redistribution programmes. This system would build both competence and accountability while ensuring alignment between education, funding, and performance monitoring.

In conclusion, the study reaffirms that the future of emerging farmer entrepreneurship lies in institutionalised public–private partnerships that combine state support with private-sector innovation and discipline. Establishing a PFMA-compliant public entity, supported by co-governed mentorship and blended-finance structures, offers a practical mechanism to bridge South Africa’s capability and performance gaps in the agricultural sector. If implemented effectively, such a model would not only empower emerging farmers to become competitive SMMEs but also strengthen food security, stimulate rural economies, and advance inclusive and sustainable agricultural transformation in South Africa.

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