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**THE TRANSFER OF AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION
TO RURAL COMMUNITIES**

BY

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture has always been part and parcel of people in rural communities. As far as South Africa is concerned it is estimated that about one third of the people in rural communities have access to land for farming practices. Unfortunately land available for farming is not used optimally despite efforts from governmental authorities and developing agencies to introduce farming practices which could enhance the development of rural agriculture. Simultaneously information exists which could be applied to help small-scale farmers to improve farming practices. However, the transfer of information to rural communities without considering the information usage behaviour of target groups proved to be ineffective. This study is essentially an investigation to establish how information from the developed world can contribute to improve rural agriculture which in turn can contribute to the upliftment of people in rural communities.

To address the problem eight objectives were set. That is, to determine the value of information in rural agriculture, determine how information is communicated in rural communities, determine the information usage behaviour of small-scale farmers, explore the existing information systems which could support access to information, identify factors which could influence the transfer process at grassroots level, identify mechanisms which could enhance the effective transfer of required information and develop a model which can serve as a guideline for the development of an effective transfer strategy.

In order to obtain background information of the circumstances under which information is to be transferred an extensive literature study has been carried out regarding, development in rural communities, including the impact of the oral tradition still prevailing in rural communities, the existing state of rural agriculture in South Africa, the value of information as a resource, the information transfer process as it manifests in rural communities, including information systems at the disposal of target groups in rural areas, transfer techniques and mechanisms appropriate, as well as factors impacting the transfer process. The Phokoane Case provided a real-life situation where the practical application of information transfer to small-scale farmers could be investigated in depth.

The outcome of this investigation proved that information as a resource is imperative for the development of rural agriculture. Although not tangible, it acts as a dynamic force which can empower recipients to take informed decisions. The transfer of information to small-scale farmers (and rural people in general) differs markedly from transfer practices in the developed world. Due to an unawareness of what information entails and a lack of background to modern farming practices, there will be no demand for information. Therefore, a deliberate transfer effort is required. Information from the information resource system of the developed world can best be transferred when transfer techniques and mechanisms from the indigenous information system are applied. The service of a facilitator who is knowledgeable of both worlds and who knows how to coordinate and manage information, is imperative. A model has been developed which can serve as a guideline for the design of effective information transfer strategies to be used in development programmes.

SAMEVATTING

Landbou het nog altyd 'n inherente deel van mense in landelike gemeenskappe uitgemaak. Wat Suid-Afrika betref, word dit bereken dat ongeveer een derde van die grond van ontwikkelingsgebiede vir boerderydoeleindes toeganklik is. Ten spyte van pogings van die owerhede en ontwikkelingsagentskappe om verbeterde boerderypraktyke bekend te stel, word grond ongelukkig nie optimaal daarvoor benut nie. Terselfdertyd bestaan daar inligting wat aangewend kan word om kleinboere te help om hul boerderypraktyke te verbeter. Die oordrag van inligting blyk egter ondoeltreffend te wees sonder inagneming van die inligtinggebruikgedrag van die teikengroepe. Hierdie ondersoek is juis daarop gerig om vas te stel hoe inligting van die ontwikkelde wêreld kan bydra om bestaansboerdery in ontwikkelende gemeenskappe te verbeter, wat dan weer kan bydra to die opheffing van mense in landelike gemeenskappe.

Ten einde die probleem aan te spreek is agt doelwitte gestel. Dit sluit in: die bepaling van die waarde van inligting vir ontwikkelende landbou, bepaling van hoe inligting in landelike gemeenskappe gekommunikeer word, bepaling van die inligtinggebruikgedrag van kleinboere, verkenning van bestaande inligtingstelsels wat toegang tot inligting kan verleen, identifiëring van faktore wat inligtingoordrag op voetsoolvlak kan beïnvloed, identifisering van meganismes wat inligtingoordrag doeltreffend kan bevorder en die ontwikkeling van 'n model wat as 'n riglyn vir die ontwikkeling van 'n doeltreffende strategie vir die oordrag van inligting kan dien.

'n Omvattende literatuurstudie is uitgevoer om agtergrondinligting in te samel oor die omstandighede waaronder inligting in landelike gemeenskappe oorgedra word - insluitende 'n studie van die impak van die mondeling tradisie wat nog steeds in landelike gemeenskappe bestaan, die huidige stand van bestaansboerdery in Suid-Afrika, die waarde van inligting as 'n hulpbron, die inligtingoordragproses soos wat dit in landelike gebiede manifesteer - insluitende inligtingstelsels tot die beskikking van teikengroepe in hierdie gebiede, toepaslike oordrag tegnieke en meganismes, sowel as faktore wat die oordragproses beïnvloed. Die Phokoane-gevallstudie is 'n praktiese voorbeeld waar die inligtingoordrag na kleinboere in die werklike lewe in diepte ondersoek kon word.

Die uitslag van hierdie ondersoek het bewys dat inligting 'n noodsaaklike hulpbron vir die ontwikkeling van bestaanslandbou is. Alhoewel inligting nie tasbaar is nie, is dit 'n dinamiese krag wat ontvangers in staat stel om ingeligte besluite te neem. Die oordrag van inligting aan bestaansboere (en landelike mense in die algemeen) verskil aansienlik van inligtingoordrag in die ontwikkelde wêreld. As gevolg van onkunde oor wat inligting behels en 'n gebrek aan agtergrondinligting van moderne boerderypraktyke, is daar geen vraag na inligting nie. Gevolglik moet inligting doelbewus oorgedra word. Inligting van die ontwikkelde wêreld se inligtinghulpbronselsel kan die beste oorgedra word met behulp van tegnieke en meganismes van die inheemse inligtinghulpbronselsel. Die diens van 'n fasiliteerder wat kundig is omtrent beide inligtingstelsels en weet hoe om inligting te bestuur, is 'n noodsaaklike vereiste. 'n Model, wat as 'n riglyn kan dien by die ontwerp van 'n doeltreffende inligtingoordragstrategie vir ontwikkelingsprogramme, is ontwikkel.

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