



**FACTORS AFFECTING THE PERSISTENCE OF AGRICULTURAL INCOME
GENERATING GROUPS IN LESOTHO**

by

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Abstract

This study investigated factors affecting the persistence of agricultural income generating groups in Lesotho.

Agricultural development is likely to be successful and sustainable if farmers are involved in all stages of the development process. The assistance that the Ministry of Agricultural staff offer to farmers and the farmer's commitment to agricultural business can increase the farmers production and raise their level of income.

Higher farmer participation in agricultural business is a well-recognised concept and recently several national and international development agencies including the governments in developing countries have been testing systems that encourage participation. Due to poverty, farmers are encouraged to work in groups in order to share production and marketing costs. In addition, farmers in the rural areas are found on scattered holdings where communication and transport facilities are scarce. This is not just a problem to farmers but also for the agricultural staff who are expected to deliver technical services to the farmers. Therefore it is in this context that groups play a key role at all levels.

Three types of data were collected from key-informant interviews. In-depth questionnaires were employed to interview committee members and ordinary members. A total of 24 agricultural income generating groups were sampled from a total of 62 registered and unregistered groups currently operating in Mafeteng district in Lesotho. 326 participants individually completed administered questionnaires on the experience and their personal characteristics. Observational data and discussion with relevant Mafeteng Agricultural staff provided further support for the study.

Over the years in Lesotho, groups have been formed in both the rural and the urban areas. These are short and long-term targeted groups aimed at improving the social and economic standards of the poor farmers. However, although the performance of some groups has been fairly strong, most others have proved a failure. The members disintegrate and go separate ways before achieving their economic and social objectives, due largely to inadequacy of financial resources (capital), inefficient management, co-ordination problems, lack of market opportunities, credit availability and inadequate and untimely technical agricultural assistance.

DECLARATION

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other university or other tertiary institution and to the best of my knowledge and belief, contain no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for photocopying and loan.

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