

BUILDING CAPACITY AND IMPROVING PRODUCTIVITY WITH SUGARCANE FARMERS: THE PHAKAMISA PROJECT

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The objective of the Phakamisa Project was to improve the sustainability and competitiveness of land reform beneficiaries and small-scale growers in the sugar value chain. Experience has shown that these farmers were constrained by lack of business and technical skills, their resource base and more importantly these farmers had limited aspirations and “no best practice” mind-set. Government had introduced the land reform programme and encouraged collectivisation of small-scale farmers mainly into co-operatives to enable them to access government funds and schemes. Phakamisa uses the ProductivitySA workplace challenge model of clustering individuals into hubs to enable shared services and information-sharing workshops. Using proven techniques like goal setting, identifying and measuring defined best practice targets, a continuous improvement mindset is being introduced. This study reviewed the process undertaken to implement the project, the results from the first two years of participation and refinements made to the project proposal in order to achieve the desired goals. The biggest outcome was that these farmers and farmer groups did not know how and what goals to set. Measurable targets were identified, record keeping introduced, monitoring of the goal of “reducing the burn to crush delay” undertaken and contractors were better managed. This resulted in better quality cane reaching the mill within a shorter time period resulting in a better income. For the small-scale growers capacity building through introducing the Basic Principles of Productivity had to be implemented before record keeping, goal setting and measuring and monitoring. Clustering the individuals and small-scale farmer co-operatives has allowed them to share experiences and encourage self-improvement. The tools used to capacitate farmers through ProductivitySA have allowed the farmers to visualise their futures instead of managing on a day-to-day basis.

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