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Presenter Information

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An evolving model for a livestock and fodder development project involving the poverty stricken communities of the Eastern Cape Province , South Africa

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Key words : rural communities , fodder flow , grazing system , success factors

Introduction The Eastern Cape Province , particularly the Ciskei and Transkei area , is home to some of the poorest rural communities in South Africa (Ainslie 1998) . Although the agricultural potential is high with 550-1000 mm annual precipitation and generally fertile soils , subsistence agriculture , heavily reliant on government grants , is practiced . Rangeland , and with it the livestock industry , is the predominant agricultural natural resource in the Eastern Cape (Conradie 2004) . A project that started as an initiative to improve the livelihoods of impoverished people through improved sheep and wool production has developed into an integrated , multi disciplinary program . After 11 years this program encompasses a sheep breeding program , veld management system , as well as fodder crop development . This study takes from these experiences to develop an adaptive model that could be used in similar projects .

Materials and methods Three representative communities in the study area were used as case studies . Semi structured interviews were held with representatives from the farming communities , government officials , NGO's , political and traditional leaders . Together with historical data and a literature review , these interviews were used to identify key success factors . A controlled grazing system , including resting and stocking rates according to resource potential , was introduced in four communal grazing areas . Animal performance and veld condition are monitored inside and outside the system using scales , exclusion cages , drying ovens etc .

Results and discussions Five factors critical to an evolving model for a livestock and fodder development project were identified : 1) A comprehensive situation assessment involving social , economic and environmental issues , 2) Vision and goals of the project need to be clear and agreed on , 3) Knowledge needs to be captured in such a way that it is accessible to all participants , 4) Knowledge and information on the project must be used in management decisions at all levels , 5) Monitoring and evaluation to ensure a dynamic , evolving project . Variation in climatic conditions , management capabilities , as well as external factors , limited success rates immediately after implementation .

Conclusions An adaptive management system incorporating the success factors and with the core components of facilitation , participation and an evolving knowledge system , provides a model for a livestock and fodder development project . A strong social component is essential for a project of this nature .

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