

# Crop Farming in Mpharane, SA – Constraints and Opportunities for a more Market-Oriented Production

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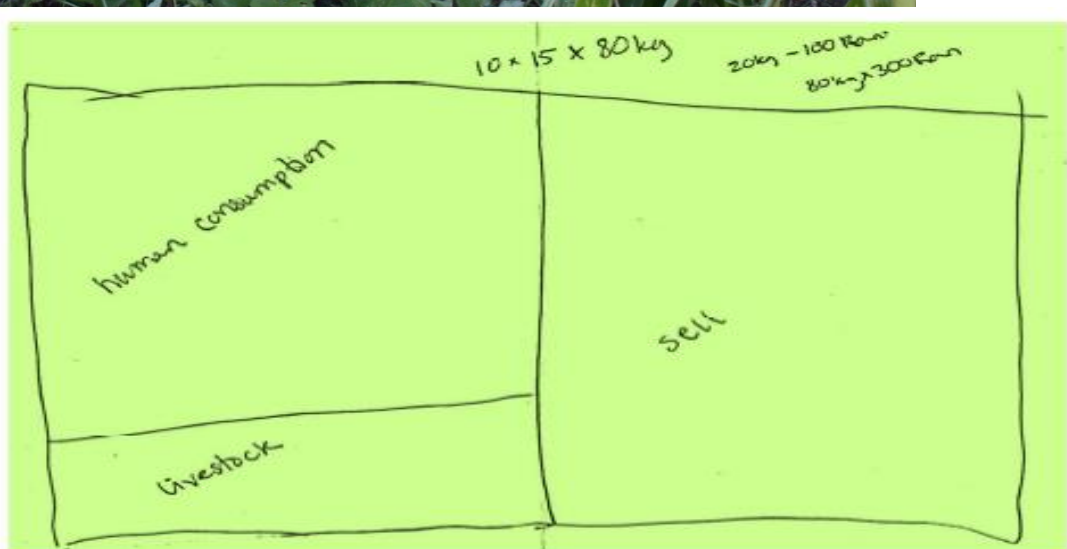
**Objective**  
To examine why farmers in Mpharane mainly produce to own consumption and what the constraints and opportunities are for a more market-oriented production by looking into biophysical and socioeconomic factors

**Results**  
**Livelihood diversification**

- Farming is not a primary income but merely used for subsistence
- Villagers diversify their income strategies



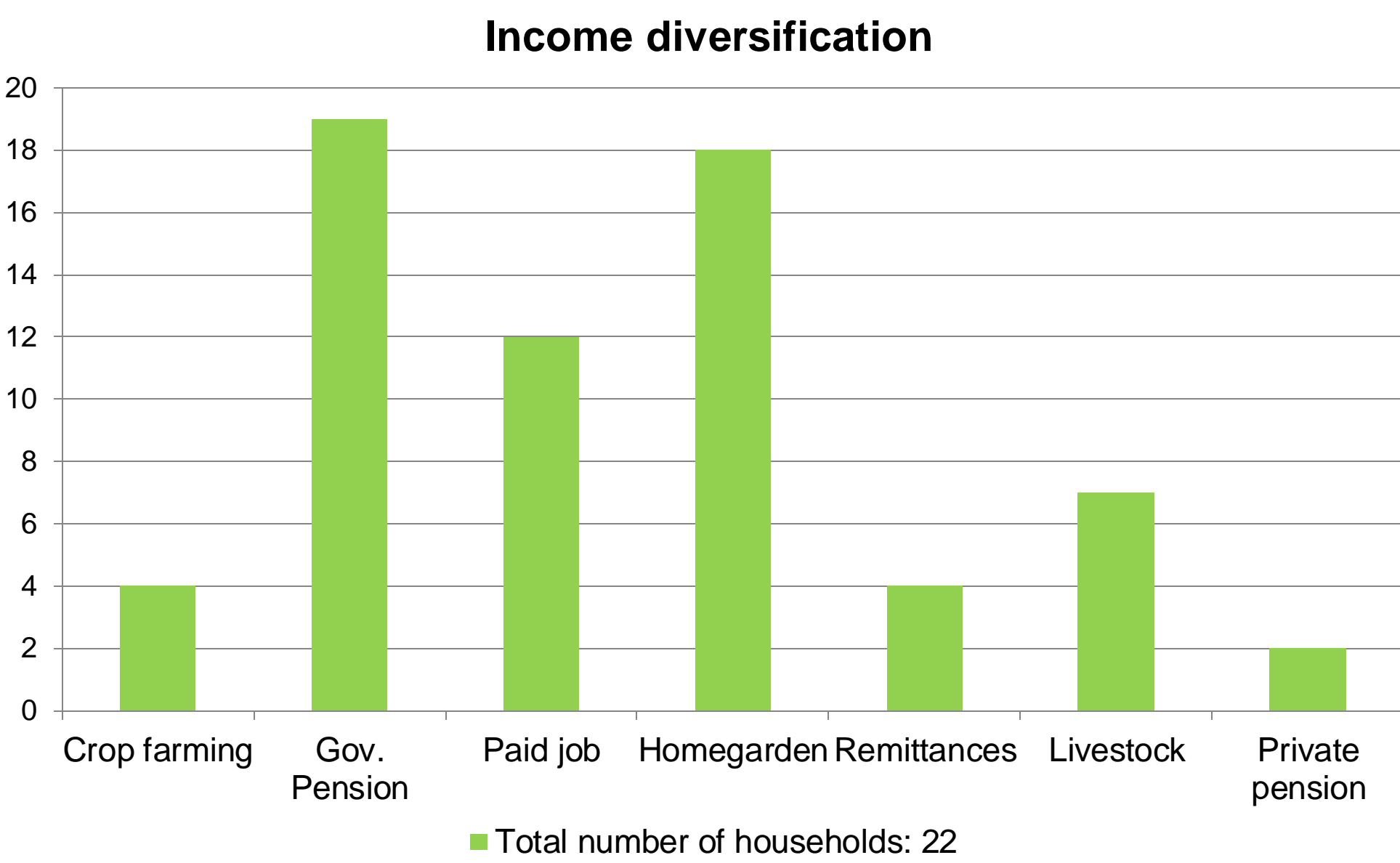
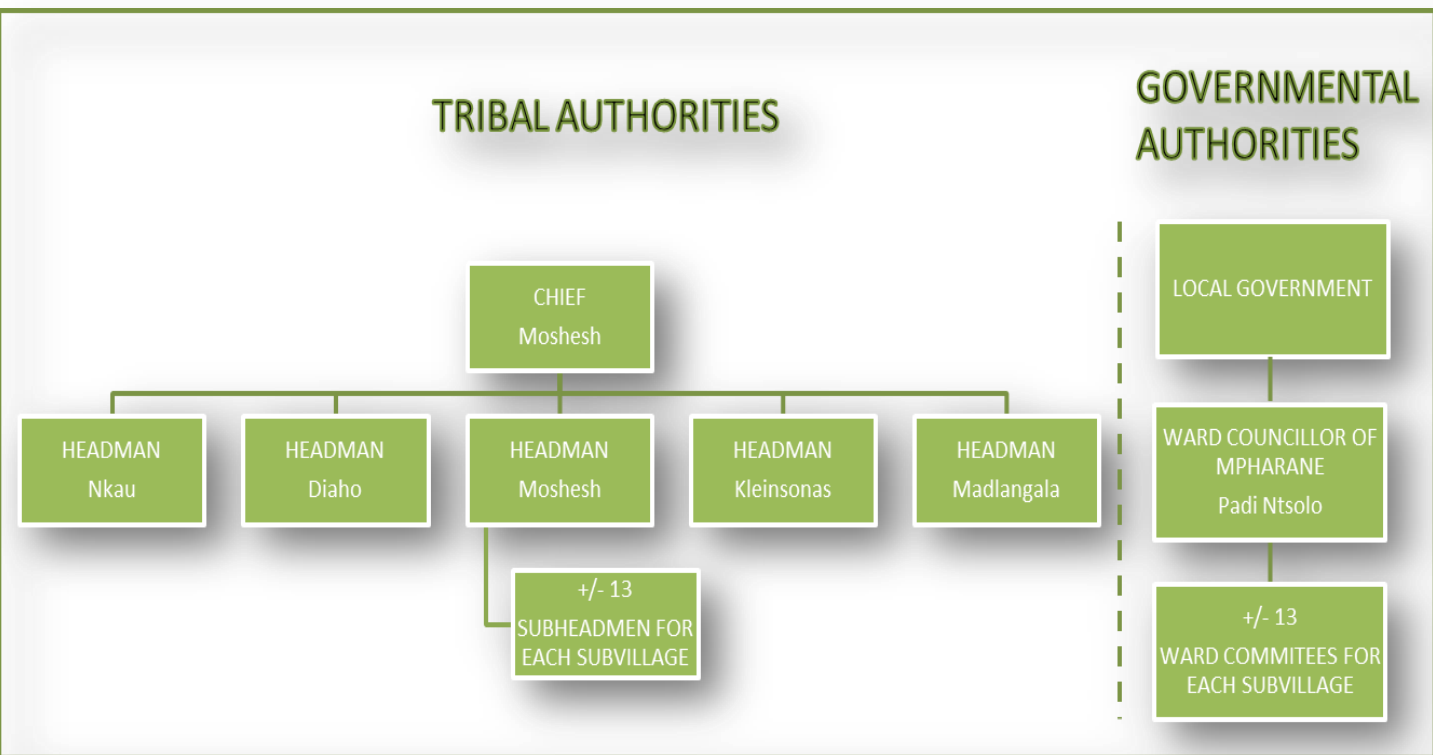
Ben Tenza weeding his maize field



Participatory mapping: use of yields from maize field by Matlatslets Tsoana, Mpharane

**Field Site**

- Mpharane village; located in a former homeland in Eastern Cape, South Africa
- Uneven gender distribution: 50% more women than men
- An area with high biological productivity and high mean annual rainfall
- High unemployment rate
- Dual authority structures:
  - Tribal positions are inherited within family
  - Governmental positions are elected by the community



**Finance**

- The main reason for not cultivating is limited access to liquidity for financing seeds and ploughing.
- Lack of reliable lending possibilities and no desire from farmers to borrow money because of the high risks involved in farming

**Agricultural Practices**

- Monocropping with low input result in low yields
- Due to change from oxen to tractor, the ability to plough is dependent on household liquidity or social network

**Soil Quality**

- Great variety in soil types, which are sensitive to different risks and requires differentiated cultivation practices

**Farming in Mpharane**

- Few villagers cultivate their fields
- Mainly self-sufficient production for household consumption and livestock feeding
- Low-input system with organic fertilizer being the most common input
- Integrated farming system with livestock

**Climatic Conditions**

- High vulnerability towards hailstorms, flooding and drought



Red soil north of Mpharane

Black soil south of Mpharane

**Methodology**

- Questionnaire survey
- In-depth and key informant interviews
- Informal conversations
- Soil samplings and analysis
- Transect walk
- Participatory Rural Appraisal methods
  - Income ranking
  - Seasonal calendar
  - Historical timeline
  - Yearly income graph
  - Crop mapping

**Tenure Rights**

- Permit to Occupy land is inherited from family
- Farmers cannot buy extra land, but renting from friends/family is possible
- Chief distributes land access rather than a free market



Participatory Rural Appraisal Session doing a historical time line with villages elders

**Market Access**

- Farmers mainly sell from their home to family and friends
- Farmers are satisfied with their current marketing options and the constraint for increased sales is the low yields



Harvest from home garden

**Conclusion**  
Villagers in Mpharane engage in subsistence farming as part of their household strategy. But only a minority in Mpharane base their entire livelihood on agricultural activities, instead it is common that people gain from several livelihood activities to decrease their vulnerability to risks. Rather than access to a market low yields were identified as the main constraint for a more market oriented production. The low yields were caused by many different interrelated factors both of a biophysical and socio-economic nature.

**Acknowledgements**  
A special thanks to our South African translator Ben Tenza and the people from Mpharane who opened their homes and invited us into their lives.

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