



Exploring the management challenges faced by small-scale farmers in Dr Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality, South Africa

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the mini-dissertation submitted herewith to the North-West University Business School in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree is my own original work. It has been text-edited in accordance with professional communication standards and has not been previously submitted to any other institution for evaluation purposes.

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the management challenges faced by small-scale farmers in Dr Kenneth Kaunda District, South Africa. A qualitative research method was employed following a research onion approach, underpinned by an interpretivist philosophy through which the researcher identified themes and subthemes in participants' experiences and perspectives. Data were collected from 10 participants through semi-structured interviews, including 7 men and 3 women aged 43 to 73, and data saturation was reached.

The collected data were transcribed and reviewed, and thematic analysis was applied to identify key themes and subthemes related to participants' experiences and perceptions of the management challenges they face. Eight themes were identified: limited business management skills and marketing skills, limited access to finance, ineffective labour management, inadequate risk management practices, insufficient record-keeping systems, limited adoption of technology, and inadequate government support. Key subthemes included lack of financial planning, lack of marketing plan, inconsistent market supply, high input cost, lack of mechanisation, dependence on government grants, insufficient collateral, incomplete records, high employee turnover, lack of insurance coverage, high stock theft rate, low affordability for technology, and insufficient grant support. Two major categories for themes and subthemes are identified as limited knowledge and insufficient capital.

The study found that there were repercussions of limited knowledge (coded as "know how"), mentioned by more than 50% of participants; limited access to finance affects 9 out of 10 participants in growing their small-scale farming businesses; all small-scale beef cattle farmers interviewed sell their cattle at auctions where they are charged 8-10% commission fees; limited access to the market; all pig farmers interviewed complain about low producer pork prices and high pig feed costs, in relation to the retail prices paid by consumers for pork at the retail market. Moreover, all participants who farm with livestock reported livestock theft and expressed concerns about the inadequacy of government support for small-scale farmers in Dr Kenneth Kaunda District.

All participants recommended that government support be improved to fast-track the commercialization of small-scale farmers in the district. One recommended approach

is to improve the efficiency of extension service delivery. These findings underscore the importance of aligning existing policies and programs with the management challenges faced by small-scale farmers in Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District.

Keywords: Small-scale farmers, management challenges, exploration, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality, government.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Research Area Map of Dr Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality.....	23
Figure 2: The Sustainable Livelihood Framework	24
Figure 3: Factors influencing the adoption of CSA technology.....	33
Figure 4: Illustration of the Research onion approach	39
Figure 5: Inductive approach steps	40

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Research project schedule	19
Table 2: Farmers typologies in South Africa	22
Table 3: Summary of benefits and drawbacks of purposive sampling.....	44
Table 4: Thematic analysis results	51

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AgriSETA	: Agriculture Sector Education and Training Authority
AgriBEE	: Agricultural Black Economic Empowerment
BFS	: Blended Finance Scheme
CASP	: Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme
CAQDAS	: Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CSA	: Climate-Smart Agriculture
DAFF	: Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
DALRRD	: Department of Rural Development and Land Reform
DEL	: Department of Employment and Labour
Dr KK District	: Dr Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality
GDP	: Gross Domestic Product
GHG	: Green House Gases
IFAD	: International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	: International Labour Organisation
IPT	: Institutional Policy Theory
NWU	: North-West University
OECD	: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PLAS	: Proactive Land Acquisition and Support
POPIA	: Protection of Personal Information Act
RECAP	: Recapitalisation and Support Programme
SLF	: Sustainable Livelihood Framework
SSA	: Sub-Saharan Africa

Table of Contents

DECLARATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	v
LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	vii
CHAPTER ONE	1
BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	3
1.2.1 Small-Scale farmers in the South African context	4
1.3 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE STUDY	5
1.3.1 Limited business management skills	5
1.3.2 Limited marketing skills	5
1.3.3 Limited access to finance	5
1.3.4 Ineffective labour management	6
1.3.5 Inadequate risk management practices	6
1.3.6 Insufficient record-keeping systems	6
1.3.7 Limited adoption of technology	6
1.3.8 Inadequate government support	7
1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT	7

1.5	OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY.....	8
1.6	RESEARCH QUESTIONS	8
1.7	SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	9
1.8	SCOPE OF STUDY.....	9
1.9	PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS	10
1.10	RESEARCH APPROACH.....	10
1.11	RECRUITMENT STRATEGY.....	11
1.11.1	Duration of the study	11
1.11.2	Population, sampling, and sample size	11
1.12	GAINING INFORMED CONSENT	13
1.13	DATA COLLECTION TOOL.....	14
1.14	DATA ANALYSIS METHOD	15
1.15	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	16
1.16	LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	18
1.17	TRUSTWORTHINESS	18
1.18	RESEARCH PROJECT SCHEDULE.....	19
1.19	CHAPTER SUMMARY	20
	CHAPTER TWO	21
	LITERATURE REVIEW.....	21
2.1	INTRODUCTION	21
2.2	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	21
2.2.1	Definition of small-scale farmers	21

2.2.2	Theoretical Frameworks	23
2.3	MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES FACED BY SMALL-SCALE FARMERS	
2.3.1	Limited business management skills	25
2.3.2	Limited marketing skills	26
2.3.3	Limited access to finance.....	27
2.3.4	Ineffective labour management.....	28
2.3.5	Inadequate risk management practices.....	30
2.3.6	Insufficient record-keeping systems	31
2.3.7	Limited adoption of technology	32
2.3.8	Inadequate government support	33
2.4	RESEARCH GAP	35
2.5	CHAPTER SUMMARY	36
2.6	CHAPTER CONCLUSION	36
	CHAPTER THREE.....	38
	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	38
3.1	INTRODUCTION	38
3.2	RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY	39
3.3	RESEARCH APPROACH	40
3.4	RESEARCH DESIGN	41
3.4.1	Methodological choices	41
3.4.2	Research strategy	42

3.4.3	Time horizons	42
3.5	SAMPLING TECHNIQUES	43
3.6	DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES	45
3.7	DATA ANALYSIS METHODS.....	46
3.8	CHAPTER SUMMARY	48
CHAPTER FOUR.....		50
DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS.....		50
4.1	INTRODUCTION	50
4.2	DESCRIPTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS.....	50
4.3	THEMATIC PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS	50
4.3.1	Limited business management skills	53
4.3.2	Limited marketing skills	54
4.3.3	Limited access to finance.....	57
4.3.4	Ineffective labour management.....	58
4.3.5	Inadequate risk management practices.....	59
4.3.6	Insufficient record-keeping systems	60
4.3.7	Limited adoption of technology	61
4.3.8	Inadequate government support	62
4.4	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	64
4.5	CHAPTER SUMMARY	64
CHAPTER FIVE.....		65
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS		65

5.1	INTRODUCTION	65
5.2	CONCLUSIONS	65
5.3	RECOMMENDATIONS	66
5.4	MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS.....	70
5.5.	LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	71
5.6	SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE STUDY	71
	LIST OF REFERENCES	72
	ANNEXURES.....	79
	ANNEXURE A: INTERVIEW GUIDE	79

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In South Africa, small-scale farmers operate on a slightly larger scale compared to subsistence farmers, but their production is too small to be classified as commercial. Furthermore, small-scale farmers manage small farm operations of at least one hectare. Muzekenyi *et al.* (2023: 23026-23038) explained that small-scale farmers in South Africa constitute the bulk of the country's farmers. Yet they produce less than 5% of South Africa's total agricultural output, which is used to support their livelihoods. This assessment has been confirmed by Ndlovu and Masuku (2021:50), who found that small-scale farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) account for 40 to 60% of total rural income, making the small-scale farming sector the economic backbone of rural economies in Africa.

The purpose of this research was to explore the management challenges faced by small-scale farmers in a district of the North-West province in South Africa. Farmers in South Africa are categorised by their access to resources, scale, and production type. The following categories can be recognised: subsistence farmers, small-scale farmers, and commercial farmers. Subsistence farmers grow food for their own families, with a small amount of extra food being up for sale. They often farm small plots of land using conventional techniques. This group of farmers dominates the rural areas of South Africa, where access to infrastructure and contemporary agricultural inputs is usually limited (Ndlovu & Masuku, 2021:50-63).

Furthermore, in Africa, the designation of small-scale farmers varies across regions. In other places, they are usually referred to as smallholder farmers, and in South Africa, as small-scale farmers and/or emerging farmers. According to Born *et al.* (2021:18), approximately 2.5 million smallholder agricultural households in South Africa produce for both household consumption and local markets. On the other hand, in South Africa, approximately 35,000 commercial farmers are considered large-scale producers, primarily growing produce for profit. They typically have access to more advanced farming technology, larger land tracts, and established domestic and global

markets (Born *et al.*, 2021:18). Vink and Kirsten (2019:4653) further attest that this group of farmers forms the backbone of South Africa's agricultural sector.

Although small-scale farmers constitute the majority of farmers in South Africa, their contribution to food production is low compared to that of commercial farmers, as they often face challenges ranging from limited access to finance, markets, expertise, infrastructure, and technology, which hurt their livelihoods and their participation in the agricultural economy. In South Africa, small-scale farmers are estimated to produce at least 20% of the food, compared to 80% by commercial farmers. As a result, Wegerif (2022:52-66) emphasizes the need to give special attention to small-scale farmers in South Africa, given the persistent food inequality between rural and urban areas, despite overall agricultural output growth.

Furthermore, to confirm the potential role small-scale farmers can play in the South African economy, the government has developed special programs and policies to support the commercialisation of agricultural outputs produced by small-scale farmers, thereby enhancing production sustainability and livelihoods. These initiatives are and have been implemented through various programs, such as the Proactive Land Acquisition and Support (PLAS) program by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, which supports small-scale farmers in acquiring and accessing agricultural land. In addition, the Department of Agriculture has developed the CASP (Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme), which aims to provide financial assistance to small-scale farmers for the purchase of production inputs (DALRRD, 2023). Moreover, the Department of Agriculture has partnered with the Land Bank to develop a product called the Blended Finance Scheme (BFS), which comprises 50% grant and 50% loan, as part of its efforts to commercialise small-scale farmers (Land Bank, 2018).

Despite all these efforts, small-scale farmers in South Africa still face numerous challenges, compounded by management issues within programmes and schemes. Why, how, and what is happening in these programmes are among the questions that have sparked the researcher's desire to explore the management challenges small-scale farmers face, particularly in the Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District, and to make recommendations to policymakers and relevant stakeholders.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

International institutions such as the FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) view supporting small-scale farming as a means to lift nations out of poverty and hunger in a sustainable manner. Globally, small-scale farming forms the backbone of agricultural production, providing food for approximately 80% of the population in developing countries. Small farms, typically defined as those cultivating less than 2 hectares of land, account for over 90% of farms worldwide and produce approximately one-third of the global food supply (Woodhill *et al.*, 2020).

In addition, IFAD (2020) has published an article on five reasons why small-scale farmers are placed at the forefront of food systems transformation, and they include the following:

- Increased incomes and profits among small-scale farmers and their businesses are invested back into local economies, where they create jobs and equitable growth. This is found to be crucial for creating opportunities for the rural youth to live and thrive in their home communities. In contrast, the benefits from large-scale farming models tend to lack these local links, with studies showing adverse impacts on local incomes and inequality.
- Small-scale farming systems are often more environmentally sustainable in terms of practices such as organic agriculture, crop rotation, integrated pest management, and permaculture.
- Small-scale farms are especially critical for food security. These farms serve domestic and local markets, including communities that modern supermarkets do not reach.
- Small-scale farming is the main agricultural production method in Africa, employing 70–80% of the continent's population and supplying up to 60% of its food.
- Small-scale farming is a significant source of income for rural communities, particularly for women and young people. In several African nations, such as Ethiopia and Malawi, the small-scale agricultural sector makes a substantial contribution to GDP.

In the Sub-Saharan African (SSA) context, the small-scale farming sector plays a crucial role in rural livelihoods, serving as the primary source of employment, food, and income. According to Paloma *et al.* (2020:1), 820 million people worldwide suffer from hunger, including Africa, where 82% of the people living in poverty in SSA reside in rural areas, deriving the bulk of their income from agriculture. The implication is that agriculture's potential role in SSA is crucial for stimulating economic growth, eradicating poverty, and enhancing food security.

1.2.1 Small-Scale farmers in the South African context

There are numerous reasons why South Africa needs small-scale farmers, although the aim is to develop them into large-scale commercial farmers. The role played by small-scale farming in South Africa's economic landscape cannot be overemphasised. As such, small-scale farmers and farming practices have been receiving support from the South African government since 1994, to such an extent that Departments, from national to local levels, have been established with a specialised focus on the development of small-scale farmers.

Mbamba and Nsengiyumva (2024:5287) have opined that in South Africa, there are over 2 million smallholders or household farmers, compared to 35,000 commercial farmers. As a result of the magnitude of the small farming sector, the policies and programmes have been designed to assist these farmers with agricultural inputs and infrastructure, such as the Comprehensive Agricultural Support (CASP) administered by Department of Agriculture, Recapitalisation and Support Programme (RECAP) for Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy (PLAS) farms administered by Department of Land Reform and Rural Development, and most recently Blended Finance administered by Land Bank.

Despite these efforts, the South African small-scale farmers remain a vulnerable category of being in the transitional state between subsistence and commercial farmers; facing numerous management challenges, having the greatest need for support to become viable and sustainable, including those who are in Dr KK district (of which the study aims to explore).

1.3 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE STUDY

There are numerous management challenges facing small-scale farmers, which were identified through a literature review employing a funnel approach, from global to African and, finally, South African contexts. These entail the challenge of limited business management skills, limited marketing skills, limited access to finance, ineffective labour management, inadequate risk management practices, insufficient record-keeping systems, limited adoption and integration of technology, and inadequate government support (Simelane *et al.*, 2019:47, Ndlovu & Masuku, 2021:5063, Mathinya *et al.*, 2022:139-154, Assouto & Houngbeme, 2023:940).

1.3.1 Limited business management skills

Limited and/or inadequate investment in capacity building has been identified as one of the management challenges, resulting in limited business management skills that, in turn, impact farmers' productivity. To understand how training programs relate to the practical adoption of sustainable practices among small-scale farmers remains a critical challenge (Pandey *et al.*, 2024).

1.3.2 Limited marketing skills

South African small-scale farmers face numerous barriers to markets due to inadequate market information stemming from limited marketing competencies. As a result, they produce agricultural products without reliable market arrangements, making them price-takers with limited or no bargaining power to negotiate market-related prices for their products (Ndlovu & Masuku, 2021, pp. 50-63).

1.3.3 Limited access to finance

Limited access to finance is identified as one of the management challenges facing small-scale farmers, with a negative impact on productivity. Small-scale farmers without adequate collateral are generally excluded from formal financial services due to high transaction costs and information asymmetries, which deter formal banks from providing these services to them (Assouto & Houngbeme, 2023, pp. 940).

1.3.4 Ineffective labour management

Small-scale farmers face the challenge of recruiting and retaining skilled labour. This is exacerbated by competition with other sectors, for example, wage labour in the mining and construction industries. In addition, farming households often send their young, energetic, and educated members, who have a high opportunity cost for wage labour, leaving behind the elderly, women, and children on the farms to continue farming (Zantsi, 2023, pp. 426-436).

1.3.5 Inadequate risk management practices

Small-scale farmers often farm under unfavourable climatic conditions, which have adverse effects on productivity and sustainability, and they lack risk mitigation measures. According to Touch *et al.* (2024:122536), unfavourable climatic conditions, characterised by extreme events such as floods, droughts, wildfires, and heatwaves, have compounded the other challenges facing small-scale farmers, threatening their food security and livelihoods.

1.3.6 Insufficient record-keeping systems

Small-scale farmers often struggle to measure the success of their farming management, as it is said that “you cannot manage what you cannot measure, and you cannot measure what you do not record.” It is found that most small-scale farmers rely on their memories rather than formal recording systems, often resulting in inadequate monitoring and evaluation of enterprise progress and profitability, due to inaccurate data on income, input costs, and profits. In some cases, low levels of education are cited as a contributory factor (Malusi *et al.*, 2022, pp. 659-675).

1.3.7 Limited adoption of technology

The adoption of technology can help small-scale farmers enhance their farming practices and productivity, such as improving crop yields and livestock reproduction efficiency. However, small-scale farmers face significant challenges in adopting digital technology. Moreover, this is interrelated with other management challenges, such as limited access to finance and the level of expertise (Smidt & Jokonya, 2022:558, 584).

1.3.8 Inadequate government support

The government and relevant stakeholders conduct limited consultations with small-scale farmers when formulating policies and programs aimed at their development, resulting in limited reception. As a result, there are misalignments of the policies and management challenges facing small-scale farmers (Mathinya *et al.*, 2022, pp. 139-154).

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Small-scale farming in South Africa has the potential to make a significant contribution to food security, rural development, and income generation. In the North-West province, agriculture generated income from sales and services worth R44 billion between 2020 and 2021, which contributed approximately 10.7% to the total revenue of around R4.1 trillion. However, small-scale farming's contribution is estimated at 20%, although it is in the majority compared to commercial farmers (Stats SA, 2023). Additionally, South Africa has numerous stakeholders involved in programs to commercialise small-scale farmers. These include government departments at national and local levels, banks, agribusinesses, commodity organisations, tertiary institutions, and input suppliers. For instance, according to the National Treasury (2021), the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform, and Rural Development (DARLR) had spent close to R117.7 billion over four years on agriculture, rural development, and land reform, primarily in favour of small-scale farmers by 2023. However, amid a larger population in South Africa and the availability of developmental policies, products, and services from various stakeholders, small-scale farmers face several management challenges that impede their ability to become commercial businesses, especially in the Dr. KK district. The management challenges facing small-scale farmers, including their causes and recommended solutions, are among the under-researched topics. This study aimed to explore the management challenges facing small-scale farmers in Dr. KK district and provides recommendations to policymakers and relevant stakeholders.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this study was to “explore the management challenges faced by small-scale farmers in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda district municipality, South Africa”.

To achieve the primary objective, the secondary objectives of the study were:

- To establish the nature of small-scale farmers in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda (KK) district municipality.
- To examine the management challenges associated with small-scale farming in the Dr KK district municipality.
- To discuss strategies by small-scale farmers to mitigate these challenges in the Dr KK district municipality.
- To provide recommendations to policymakers and relevant stakeholders for the improvement of small-scale farmers located within Dr KK district municipality.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the research objectives, the main research question was “What are the management challenges faced by small-scale farmers located in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda (KK) district areas of the North West province of South Africa? To answer the main research question, and thus close the existing knowledge gap as stated in the problem statement, the following sub-research questions were asked:

- What is the nature of small-scale farmers, farming in Dr KK district municipality?
- What are the specific management challenges facing small-scale farmers in the Dr KK district, which impede them from becoming commercial businesses?
- What strategies do small-scale farmers have to mitigate the challenges they face in Dr KK district municipality?
- What are the recommendations to be made to policymakers and relevant stakeholders to address challenges facing small-scale farmers in Dr KK district municipality?

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study's findings will contribute to the existing body of knowledge, benefiting various stakeholders. This relates to the potential role small-scale farming can play in accelerating South African economic growth, leading to increased job creation, improved food security, and poverty eradication. The study's findings on farmers' management perceptions will help stakeholders review the policies, products, and service packages they offer to small-scale farmers, ensuring they are relevant and precisely address the management challenges they face. As a result, stakeholders will consider investing in building the management capacity of small-scale farmers to address gaps in existing support mechanisms. Small-scale farmers will gain a better understanding of their situation and that of others, as well as strategies to address specific management challenges. The findings will not only benefit small-scale farmers in Dr. KK district municipality, but also other small-scale farmers throughout the country and other parts of the world.

From a theoretical perspective, a preliminary literature review indicated that studies tend to focus more on general challenges and constraints faced by small-scale farmers than on management challenges. This study will assist other researchers in exploring the specific management challenges faced by small-scale farmers, for example, by measuring the qualitative impact of limited financial and marketing management skills on their growth and productivity.

1.8 SCOPE OF STUDY

The field of study was Agricultural Entrepreneurship and Management, with a focus on the agricultural sector. This study employed a qualitative approach to explore the management challenges faced by small-scale farmers in Dr. KK district municipality. These are farmers who operate on a small scale, in terms of the size of their farming enterprises and the number of years of farming experience, subsequently supplying markets with volumes that are smaller than demand, and as a result, struggle to outgrow the start-up phase. In addition, the study included participants recognised by the District Department of Agriculture as small-scale farmers and actively involved in the daily management of their farming enterprises. The scope did not include small-scale farmers who were still subsistence farmers, producing solely

for household consumption, nor the commercial farmers who are already established and sustainable.

1.9 PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS

This study followed the interpretivist research paradigm, and the method was qualitative, which entails viewing knowledge as constructed from real-world experiences. The interpretivist paradigm examines the role of meaning in knowledge production, emphasizing its significance through the diverse perceptions and experiences of small-scale farmers regarding the management challenges they face. This philosophy contrasts with the positivist view of truth, objectivity, and generalisation (Bryman *et al.*, 2021, pp. 29-31; William, 2024, pp. 134-138).

In addition, this study assumed an ontological perspective, as reality is explained subjectively, given that people differ and continuously construct their own realities. Ontology was constructed based on the perceptions and experiences of small-scale farmers regarding the management challenges they face. An epistemological assumption was that knowledge is gained through semi-structured interviews with participants to understand their perceptions of the management challenges they face (Bryman *et al.*, 2021, pp. 29-31).

1.10 RESEARCH APPROACH

This research was a qualitative study that explored the management challenges faced by small-scale farmers in the Dr. KK district municipality, following a descriptive, inductive design.

A qualitative study explores management challenges faced by small-scale farmers. The primary advantage of qualitative research was that it enabled an in-depth examination of the subject. In addition, it was suitable for exploratory research, as exploring management challenges facing small-scale farmers located in Dr KK district municipality were specific rather than generalised.

Qualitative research is conducted following various designs and using different approaches. There are three primary research approaches: deduction, induction, and

abduction. The inductive approach is used based on a bottom-up principle where the theoretical results are found from the analysis of the collected data (Bryman *et al.*, 2021:29 -31). The qualitative research method is deemed the most suitable for this study, as it aims to explore the management perceptions and experiences of small-scale farmers, which cannot be numerically expressed but must be understood in their own words, as expressed by the participants themselves.

1.11 RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

Recruitment strategy is a set of steps followed by the researcher to identify and attract the sampled participants. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling method based on their years of experience in small-scale farming, their knowledge of the management challenges they face in the district municipality, and their relevance to the agricultural sector. Moreover, participants were contacted telephonically, having been identified through the District Department of Agriculture offices. The District Department of Agriculture served as a gatekeeper in the study, granting researchers permission to recruit small-scale farmers through relevant extension officers.

1.11.1 Duration of the study

It took approximately 7 months (i.e., from April to October 2025) to conduct the study, encompassing recruitment, site visits, data collection through interviews, data analysis, and the writing of a mini dissertation.

1.11.2 Population, sampling, and sample size

The target population for this study is all small-scale farmers operating in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District municipalities of the North-West province, South Africa. Population is defined as the total number of individuals in a group under study. This involved small-scale farmers located within the Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District of the North-West Province. These farmers were described as those who own or lease small landholdings and engage primarily in small-scale commercial farming, including crop farming, livestock production, and mixed farming. Moreover, they were recognised and categorised by the district agriculture department as small-scale farmers. In this study, participants were selected based on their experience in small-scale farming within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda district, and their characteristics entailed the following:

- Participants were located in rural villages and peri-urban settlements in the Dr. Kenneth Kaunda district, comprising three local municipalities, like Matlosana, JB Marks, and Maqwasi Hills local municipalities.
- Participants were between 40 and 75 years of age, and they were both male and female, although the majority were males due to the gendered nature of agriculture and labour in the district
- The majority of participants were Tswana-speaking, with some understanding of English and Afrikaans.
- Participants had different levels of education, ranging from no formal education to secondary and tertiary qualifications, with most having basic literacy levels.
- Participants relied heavily on small-scale farming as the primary source of income, and therefore, they were generally low to middle-income earners.
- Participants were self-employed as full-time farmers.
- Participants had at least 5 years of experience in small-scale farming.

The purposive sampling method was used to select participants from the target population, and it is identified as the most appropriate method for selecting participants based on their level of experience and knowledge in the farming business. Sampling was conducted in accordance with the established inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion and exclusion criteria are outlined as follows:

Inclusion criteria

- Small-scale farmers who farm within the Dr KK district municipality.
- Small-scale farmers were actively involved in the daily management of farming operations.
- Participants included all small-scale farmers irrespective of the farming enterprise.
- Participants have been registered and/or recognised as small-scale farmers by the District Department of Agriculture and local authorities.
- Participants were supposed to communicate in Tswana and/or English.

Exclusion criteria

- Small-scale farmers who farm outside the Dr KK district municipality.
- Small-scale farmers engaged in farming activities on a part-time and hobbyist basis, without being actively involved in the daily management of farming operations.
- Small-scale farmers are currently receiving external management support in the form of mentorship.
- Small-scale farmers who were not recognised by the District Department of Agriculture or local authorities.
- Farmers who were fully integrated into a larger commercial or corporate operation, and do not reflect the scale or challenges typical of small-scale farmers.

The sample for this study was selected from a heterogeneous group of small-scale farmers operating a diversity of enterprises within Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District. The data collected focused on the management challenges faced by small-scale farmers, achieved through interviews with 10 small-scale farmers, after which data saturation was reached. Saturation is a common technique used to determine the sample size, defined as the point at which data collection is considered sufficient. This relies on the key assumption that, as a study continues, new explanations from the data will eventually stop emerging until the necessary number of participants is reached (Naeem *et al.*, 2024).

1.12 GAINING INFORMED CONSENT

The researcher contacted the District Department of Agriculture, formally introducing the study on small-scale farmers and requesting a contact list of all small-scale farmers within the Dr KK district municipality. Once the small-scale farmers were adequately informed about the research, its purpose, and what was expected of them, informed consent was obtained for their participation. The data collected has been kept confidential and safeguarded in accordance with the Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act of 2013, which governs the processing of personal data by public and private entities. The following is essential to note in line with the Act:

- Participant would under no obligation to divulge personal information (i.e., demographics, race, age, gender, etc).
- There would be no negative consequences to a participant if he/she decide not to provide personal information.
- Participant can request access to his/her details at any time to change any information if he/she so wish to do so.
- The researcher secured interview recording data on the Google Cloud of his Google account.
- Only the student and supervisor have access to the data, and it will not cross the borders of South Africa.
- No conflict of interest exists between the researcher and the participants, nor do power relations exist since the researcher does not work directly with the small-scale farmers in Dr Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality of South Africa.

Additionally, participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time if they did not feel comfortable continuing.

1.13 DATA COLLECTION TOOL

The data on the management challenges facing small-scale farmers were collected through an interview guide, a recognised qualitative data collection method. The interview guide was developed, and it was predominantly made of open-ended questions, which are aligned with research objectives:

- To establish the nature of small-scale farmers in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda (KK) district municipality.
- To examine the management challenges associated with small-scale farming in Dr KK district.
- To discuss strategies by small-scale farmers to mitigate these challenges in the Dr KK district.
- To provide recommendations to policymakers and relevant stakeholders for the improvement of small-scale farmers located within the Dr KK district municipality.

1.14 DATA ANALYSIS METHOD

Thematic analysis was found to be the most suitable method for exploring complex issues, such as the management challenges faced by small-scale farmers, as it enabled a detailed and systematic examination of participants' management perceptions and experiences. It (the method) was used to identify themes through reading and rereading of the transcribed data, which were collected through semi-structured interviews with small-scale farmers in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda district.

The data analysis process was structured in the following steps:

Step 1: Data collection

Interviews with small-scale farmers in the Dr. KK district of the North-West province were used as a data collection tool to examine the management challenges they face.

Step 2: Transcription of data

The collected data were transcribed using Atlas. Ti software, after it had been summarised.

Step 3: Summarisation of the data

In this phase, the collected data was examined and distilled into the key points, information, and findings. This means condensing the information into a concise structure and providing a summary.

Step 4: Thematic analysis

In this step, the collected data was analysed using Atlas. Ti software. Thematic analysis was carried out according to the following steps:

(1) Familiarisation with collected data

At this stage, the researcher familiarised himself with the transcribed data by rereading the transcripts. This has helped determine the type and number of themes that might emerge from the data, thereby revealing the richness of the initial findings.

(2) Coding

This was the step that followed familiarisation with the transcribed data, in which the researcher generated codes using Atlas. Ti. ti coding feature.

(3) Theme searching

In this step, the researcher searched for the themes amongst the generated codes.

(4) Theme reviewing

The themes were reviewed, categorised into main and sub-themes, and presented more systematically.

(5) Theme naming

This was the final step of naming the themes, having reviewed them (i.e, refining and defining the themes).

(6) Report writing

This was the final step of writing the results from the analysed data through Atlas.ti, software.

1.15 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study exploring management challenges facing small-scale farmers took ethical considerations into account. This entailed identifying and adhering to ethical values, including obtaining informed consent, respecting dignity, maintaining data privacy and confidentiality, and maintaining honesty and transparency. It also involved protecting small-scale farmers from harm resulting from the transgression of these principles, as outlined in NWU's ethical principles governing research conduct.

Obtaining informed consent

The researcher contacted the District Department of Agriculture, formally introducing the study on small-scale farmers and requesting a contact list of 30 small-scale farmers within the Dr. KK district municipality. Once the small-scale

farmers were adequately informed about the research, its purpose, and what was expected of them, informed consent was obtained for their participation.

Avoiding harm

Research minimised the potential for the study to cause psychological harm by observing participants throughout the study. Participants had the right to withdraw at any time if they felt uncomfortable continuing with the study, provided they were informed of the potential benefits and risks of participation.

Respecting dignity

The right to privacy in this study was upheld by ensuring that interviews took place in venues free of disturbances, such as public places, other people, noise, darkness, dust, and wind. The venue was chosen according to the participants' preferences.

Protection of data privacy

It was amongst the researcher's priorities to protect participant privacy, and research findings about the management challenges small-scale farmers face would be shared in a way that respects participants' right to privacy and confidentiality in terms of relevant data protection laws, e.g, Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act (Act 4 of 2013). As such, participants' privacy was protected by keeping their data confidential, and their identities were not going to be revealed without their consent. In addition, this study utilised Google Cloud to ensure that interview-recorded data was stored and encrypted using the researcher's Google account. Google Cloud offers data encryption services to ensure that data is protected.

Anciaux *et al.* (2025) define data encryption as the process of protecting data by converting it from readable (plain text) to an unreadable (encrypted) format, so that it cannot be accessed by anyone except those who possess the decryption key. In addition, ethical clearance was obtained from the NWU Research Ethics Committee.

1.16 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

It is critically important to acknowledge the limitations of the study, though it enhances the body of literature concerning the small-scale farmers. As such, the two key constraints worth acknowledging for this study were geographical coverage and the use of a non-probability (purposive) sampling method. This study focused on 10 small-scale farmers in Dr Kenneth Kaunda District, who were initially interviewed and who reached data saturation.

The research objective could not, therefore, be used to draw broad generalizations about the entire South African population of small-scale farmers, but rather to explore the management challenges facing this specific portion. Moreover, the use of a nonprobability (purposive) sampling method was found to offer advantages in terms of convenience and research budget.

1.17 TRUSTWORTHINESS

In this study, which explored the management challenges facing small-scale farmers, it was crucial to have trustworthy research findings. To ensure this was achieved, a combination of various methods and techniques was employed.

Firstly, developing a concise guide to interview participants on their perceptions and experiences has enabled interviewers to maintain a consistent approach and avoid bias, such as leading questions. This can be achieved by using open-ended questions. The researcher has cross-checked and validated interpretations to enhance the trustworthiness of the research findings by using data from multiple sources, including interviews, documents, and observations, throughout the interview process. Moreover, collaborations are established with agricultural experts and peers to discuss the research process (including interview guides, coding, and data analysis), thereby helping address potential biases and providing broader perspectives on data interpretation and research findings.

In addition, sharing interpretations of research findings with participants is another measure to confirm the accuracy of the findings and to check whether their perceptions are well represented. Lastly, audio recording (with participants' consent) and field note capture of non-verbal communication and body language were used to enhance the accuracy of data transcription.

1.18 RESEARCH PROJECT SCHEDULE

The study was conducted according to the schedule outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Research project schedule

	Phase	Activities	Duration	Timeframe
1	Preparation	Proposal refinement, securing ethical clearance Identifying participants & obtaining informed consent	8 weeks	May –July 2025
2	Data Collection	Conducting semi-structured interviews	8 weeks	August - October 2025
3	Data Analysis	Thematic Data Analysis using ATLAS.ti software	1 week	November 2025
4	Mini-dissertation	Drafting findings, stakeholder validation, and finalising mini-dissertation	1 week	November 2025
5	Dissemination	Presenting findings to stakeholders and policymakers	2 weeks	March 2026

1.19 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Small-scale farmers face numerous management challenges, which hinder their ability to transition beyond the start-up phase and become established commercial farmers. The research aimed to explore the management challenges facing small-scale farmers in the Dr. KK District Municipality, the strategies they proposed to mitigate these challenges, and to provide recommendations to improve their situation.

The research was identified as qualitative, grounded in an interpretivist paradigm, and employing an inductive research approach. Moreover, the sampling method employed was purposive, and data was collected through interviews and analysed using thematic data analysis. The latter phases of the research process were considered sufficient to provide the answers to the research questions.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This study aimed to explore the management challenges faced by small-scale farmers in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality, South Africa. Small-scale farmers play a crucial role in South Africa's agricultural sector, contributing significantly to rural employment, food security, and poverty alleviation. As a result, several institutions in South Africa, including government departments and the private sector, have developed various policies, products, and services tailored for the commercialisation of small-scale farmers.

However, despite the specific roles of stakeholders, small-scale farmers face numerous challenges that hinder their ability to become commercially viable. This literature review examines the key management challenges faced by small-scale farmers in the Dr KK District of the North-West Province, South Africa. These challenges include limited business management skills, restricted access to markets and finance, ineffective labour management, poor risk management practices, inadequate record-keeping systems, limited adoption and integration of technology, and insufficient government support (Mathinya *et al.*, 2022, pp. 139-154; Ndlovu & Masuku, 2021, pp. 50-63).

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.2.1 Definition of small-scale farmers

Small-scale farmers are generally defined as producers who cultivate crops, rear livestock, or raise fish on a limited scale for household consumption and income generation, and are also referred to as smallholders (Knight, 2022). However, the definition of small-scale farmers varies across countries and agroecological zones, as these farmers are heterogeneous and differ in terms of farm characteristics, resource availability, and production orientations (Yazdan & Feil, 2021).

Olofsson (2019:37-59) identified several criteria for classifying small-scale farmers, including farm size, sources of farming capital and income, labour, market integration,

and livelihood diversification. It is argued that farm size should not be used in isolation as a criterion for defining a small-scale farmer. For example, a farm of 1 hectare of irrigated peri-urban land for vegetable and herb gardening may have higher profit potential than a 500-hectare farm of low-quality land (Yazdan & Feil, 2021).

Farm size and the production objective are identified as the two primary criteria for defining and categorising small-scale farmers across countries and regions (Olofsson, 2019, pp. 37-59). However, in South Africa, definitions of small-scale farmers vary according to institutional policies and criteria. A brief overview of definitions of small-scale farmers within the South African context is outlined in Table 1.

Table 2: Farmers typologies in South Africa (Yazdan & Feil, 2021)

Institution	Identified typologies	Criteria
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF)	Subsistence farmers, Smallholder farmers, Commercial farmers	Land size, Production orientation
National Planning Council	Subsistence farmers (<0.5ha), smallholder farmers (0.5 -5ha)	Land size
Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DARDLR)	Landless households, Commercially ready subsistence farmers, Commercial smallholders, and Well-established black commercial farmers	Land size, Production orientation, and Assets

In this study, the focus was on small-scale farmers, as defined by DAFF and DARDLR, and the inclusion criteria stated in chapter one. The study was conducted among small farmers in the Dr KK District Municipality, which comprises three local municipalities (i.e., Matlosana, JB Marks, and Maquassi Hills). The research map of Dr. KK District Municipality is outlined in Figure 1 below.

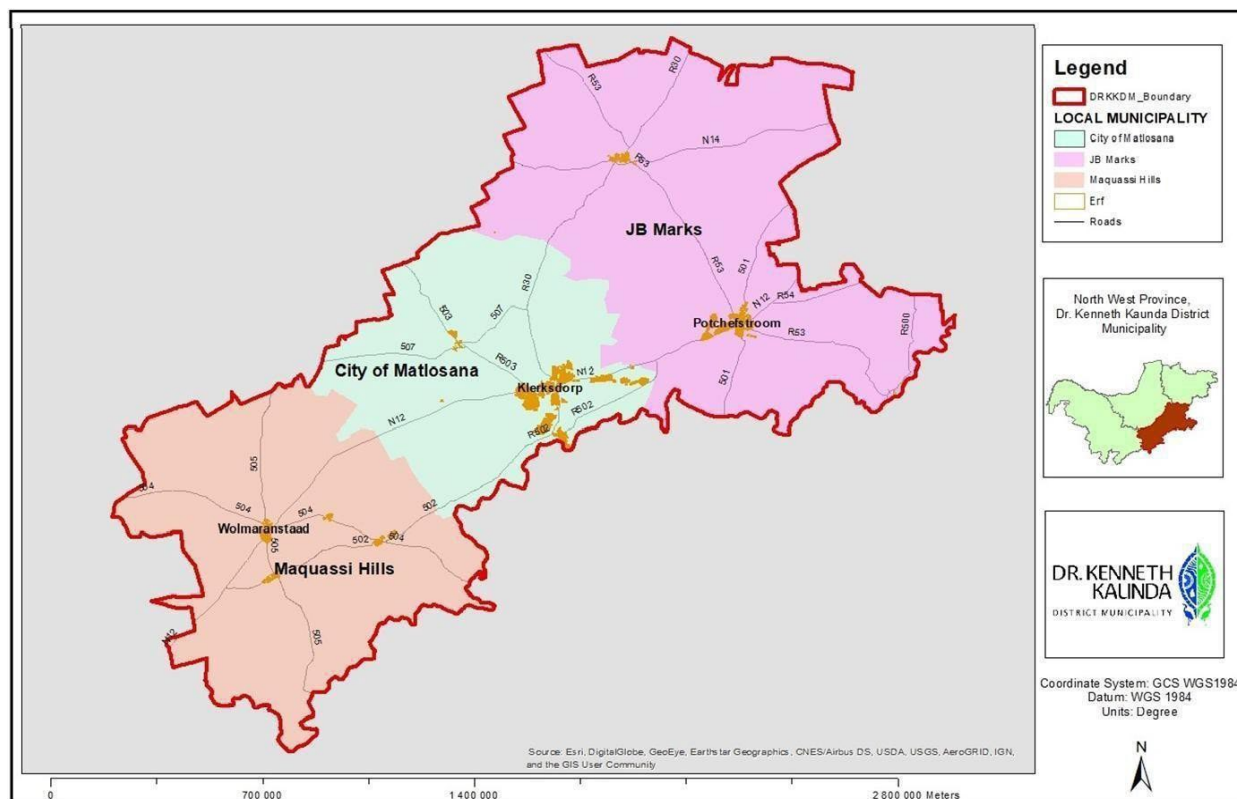


Figure 1: Research Area Map of Dr Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality (Dr KKDM,2022)

According to the Stats SA Census 2022, there are 167,565 agricultural households in the North-West province, which is close to 7% of the South African agricultural population of approximately 2.2 million small-scale farmers. Although there is no exact data on the number of small-scale farmers in the Dr KK district, the number of households is estimated at close to 10,000 (DRKKDM, 2022), of which the majority are small-scale farmers, followed by miners.

2.2.2 Theoretical Frameworks

Two theoretical frameworks were found to be relevant for exploring the management challenges faced by small-scale farmers in Dr. KK District Municipality: The Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) and Institutional Policy Theory (IPT), which together formed a hybrid framework for the current study.

2.2.2.1 Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF)

Since the early 1900s, SLF has served as the foundation for research on how people, particularly small-scale farmers, manage their livelihoods. Singh and Mishra (2025)

define livelihood as the means and resources individuals or households use to ensure access to basic needs, such as food, water, shelter, and money. Approximately 1.3 billion small-scale farmers rely on agriculture for employment, and 86% of rural residents rely on small-scale farming for their livelihoods. The South African government has provided a range of services to small-scale farmers in recent years to enhance their livelihoods, income, and food security (Mokgomo *et al.*, 2022, 1760).

The Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) underpins exploratory research on the management challenges faced by small-scale farmers by investigating how they maintain their livelihoods. According to Natarajan *et al.* (2022:105898), livelihood depends on numerous assets – human, social, natural, physical, and financial capital, all of which guide livelihood strategies to achieve livelihood outcomes, as outlined in Figure 2.

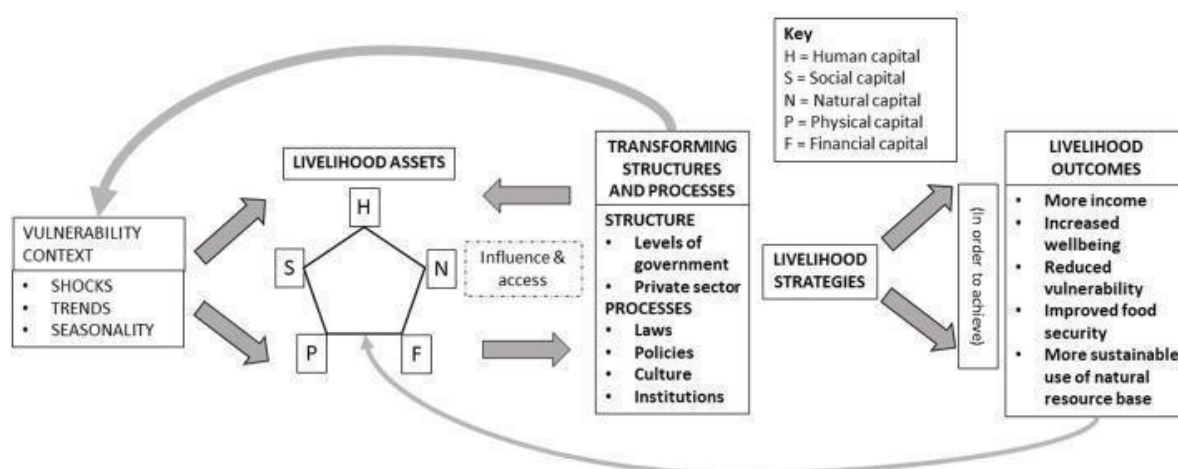


Figure 2: The Sustainable Livelihood Framework (Natarajan *et al.*, 2022, pp. 105898)

2.2.2.2 Institutional Policy Theory (IPT)

The Institutional Policy Theory (IPT) aimed to understand how government policies and institutional capacity affect farm management among small-scale farmers. In South Africa, small-scale farmers operate in an environment shaped by numerous agricultural policies, legislation, land reform initiatives, farmer support programs, and rural development strategies. As a result, inadequate government support, partly due to institutional inefficiencies, significantly impacts the productivity of small-scale farmers (Sahu & Choudhary, 2025).

The hybridisation of the two frameworks (SLF and IPT) is justified because both have a direct impact on the productivity and livelihoods of small-scale farmers. SLF underpins a wide range of factors that contribute to the management challenges faced by small-scale farmers. At the same time, IPT examines the impact of government and other key stakeholders on the development of small-scale farmers through diverse policies, interventions, and strategies.

2.3 MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES FACED BY SMALL-SCALE FARMERS

2.3.1 Limited business management skills

Small-scale farmers often lack the business management skills needed to increase productivity and become commercially viable. These limitations manifest in poor planning, inadequate financial management, lack of business plans, inefficient resource allocation, lack of bookkeeping and computer literacy, and inadequate marketing strategies; affecting their management capabilities to plan, control and monitor farming operations; all which impede the growth and sustainability of small-scale farming enterprises (Muzekenyi *et al.*,2023: 23026-23038, Pandey *et al.*,2024).

Pandey *et al.* (2024) further claim that the majority of small-scale farmers experience uncoordinated production cycles and struggle to account for input costs, monitor cash flows, or plan for future investments due to limited business and production planning capabilities. In a study on the factors influencing management challenges for smallholder sheep and goat farmers in Thabo Mofutswana District, Free State, South Africa, Neriath *et al.* (2024:119-127) found that nearly 81% of respondents did not have business plans to guide their farming management and decision-making processes. A low level of literacy was cited as one of the underlying causes.

Limited access to extension services and training is found to exacerbate the situation. Extension services play a crucial role in disseminating essential agricultural information to small-scale farmers, without which these farmers are less able to adapt to the latest developments, resulting in inefficiencies, outdated practices, and declining productivity (Raidimi & Kabit, 2019, pp. 120-130). In addition, limited financial management skills, financial literacy, and awareness of funding opportunities hinder

small-scale farmers' ability to access finance. As a result, banks and other financial intermediaries are often reluctant to lend to small-scale farmers, as they are considered and categorised as high-risk clients due to the stated and other factors investigated by numerous researchers (Assuoto & Hounbeme, 2023:940, Myeni *et al.*, 2019:3003, Ndung'u, 2023, Kiros & Meshesha, 2022:2035043).

2.3.2 Limited marketing skills

Many small-scale farmers sell their produce in informal markets within their surrounding communities. Due to a lack of marketing management skills, small-scale farmers often lack systematic and coordinated market arrangements, resulting in smooth transactions and purchases not taking place. As a result, they are often excluded from lucrative market channels, such as direct sales to supermarkets and exports. Moreover, this exclusion is compounded by a lack of suitable storage facilities, limited value added to their products, transportation constraints, and ineffective sharing of marketing information among small-scale farmers, extension officers, and other stakeholders (Ndlovu & Masuku, 2021, pp. 50-63). Mothiba (2019) further noted that weak supply chain linkages and stringent quality and grading standard requirements in the formal agricultural markets further marginalise small-scale farmers.

Lack of structured marketing strategies and market information, poor South African roads, and a lack of reliable transportation from farms to markets, as well as high transactional costs, and lack of knowledge of pricing, branding, and distribution networks, are identified as the significant factors affecting marketing management that make small-scale farmers fail to derive value and enjoy economic value from their produce. As a result, small-scale farmers often sell their products to intermediaries (i.e, middlemen) at low prices, thereby undermining the profitability and reinvestment capacity of small-scale farming enterprises (Mothiba, 2019).

There is a correlation between marketing skills, marketing orientation, and management. The more limited small-scale farmers are in marketing skills, the less efficient they are in marketing orientation and management. Kamarulzaman and Khairuddin (2021:211-228) define marketing orientation as the implementation of

marketing plans, which indicates a business's effort to understand the market situation, including customer and competitor information, to reflect on customers' needs and respond to competitors' strategies and practices. This enables businesses to understand consumers' needs and respond strategically to market pressures. However, small-scale farmers are often limited in their marketing orientation, as they have a limited understanding of their customers, inefficiently estimate market demand, and have limited bargaining power in product pricing.

Ndlovu and Masuku (2021:50-63) further attest that most small-scale farmers initially established their farming enterprises with the primary goal of household food production rather than a customer-centric commercial purpose, resulting in a poor marketing orientation. In addition to marketing orientation, marketing strategy is a critical element in any product design, packaging, promotion, and pricing. A typical implementation innovation of marketing strategies involves changes in any of the four basic elements – product, price, promotion, and place- to increase benefits, income, and sales. Proactive marketing strategies help overcome the management challenges of operating under adverse economic conditions (Kamarulzaman & Khairuddin, 2021, pp. 211–228). However, small-scale farmers are limited in innovative marketing strategies, as they often meet the market requirements in terms of product quality, volumes, and consistency of supply, against the limited production volumes (Kamarulzaman & Khairuddin, 2021, pp. 211–228).

2.3.3 Limited access to finance

Limited access to finance is identified as one of the management challenges faced by small-scale farmers, with a negative impact on productivity. Formal banks are often reluctant to provide finance to small-scale farmers because they lack adequate collateral. Moreover, small-scale farmers are characterized by high transaction costs and information asymmetries, which exacerbate their limited access to finance (Houenssou & Senou, 2021, pp. 940; Luvhengo & Lekunze, 2017, pp. 601- 611). Besides the latter reasons, in one study by Kiros and Meshesha (2022:2035043) on factors that affect small-scale farmers' access to credit in Basona Worana District, North Showa Zone, Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia, the regression results have indicated that the primary determinant factors that limit access to finance for small-

scale farmers, including age, gender of the household head, family size, extension contacts, off-farm income, interest rate, lending procedure, and group lending and credit repayment period.

According to another study on small-scale crop farmers in the Free State province of South Africa by Myeni *et al.* (2019:3003), most respondents (98%) had never received credit for crop production, and only 2% had access to farm credit. The results revealed that most South African small-scale farmers have limited access to credit due to their low incomes, advanced age, and limited education, making it difficult for them to meet basic credit requirements. Moreover, it was found that most financial institutions prefer lending to small-scale farmers in economically active age groups who have a reliable off-farm source of income or a proven record of farm income (Myeni *et al.*, 2019, pp. 3003).

In addition, Ngung'u (2023) identified several factors that limit access to finance for small-scale farmers, including the distance between financial institutions and farms, limited financial management skills, inadequate financial literacy, and a lack of awareness of funding opportunities. All the factors mentioned that affect access to finance reduce the productivity of small-scale farmers, thereby impeding their ability to become commercially viable entities.

2.3.4 Ineffective labour management

Small-scale agriculture is the primary source of jobs, food, and income for rural populations worldwide. Globally, approximately 450 million people are waged workers, primarily employed in agricultural sectors, many of whom rely on incomes from jobs in the plantation sector. Although the share of employment in agriculture has declined in many countries due to technological advancements and economic shifts, small-scale farming remains a crucial sector for livelihoods, food security, and rural development (ILO, 2024).

However, globally, agricultural workers regularly face high levels of poverty, food insecurity, poor health and safety conditions, and a lack of labour and social protection. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2024) policy brief, over 80%

of the extreme poor people live in rural areas, and overall, youth are more likely to be working poor than adults, especially in Africa. For instance, in 2019, 40.7% of youth in low-income countries were considered extremely poor, earning less than US\$2.15 per day, compared to 36.8% of working adults aged 25 and above (ILO, 2024).

Christiaensen (2020:211-228) further confirms that creating more and better-paying jobs should be Africa's top policy priority, just as is the case with the rest of the world. The African continent's 200 million young people (i.e., those aged 15-24) are currently seeking employment, a figure predicted to increase to 275 million by 2030 and 325 million by 2050, suggesting that most Africans live below subsistence levels and cannot afford to be unemployed.

The management challenge faced by small-scale farmers is to increase returns to labour and land, within current or new occupations, and this implies there is a massive need for investment in this sector to improve the economies of scale and levels of farm productivity for contribution towards job creation for the unemployed masses (Christiaensen, 2020:211-228, Mbamba & Nsengiyumva, 2024:5287). Additionally, in South Africa, the small-scale farming sector has the potential to create jobs and contribute to economic growth. According to Neves (2020), strategies for creating jobs through labour-intensive small-scale farming and integrating these farmers into agricultural value chains have been articulated in official policy pronouncements, such as the National Development Plan, AgriBEE, and the Economic Development Department's New Growth Plan.

However, small-scale agriculture is the lowest-paying employer due to low levels of farm income generated, compared to other sectors (such as the mining sector) that employ semi- and unskilled labour similar to that on small-scale farms. As a result, small-scale farmers struggle to recruit and retain skilled labour on farms (Christiaensen, 2020, pp. 211-228; Zantsi, 2023, pp. 426-436). In addition, other factors contribute to ineffective labour management among small-scale farmers. These include the farms' geographical location, as they are often situated in remote areas, away from cities and townships, which makes retaining farm workers a management challenge.

These isolated settings are typically less attractive to potential farm workers for employment and living due to limited access to shops, social and medical services, and schools for children (OECD, 2023). Moreover, due to poor social life on farms, most farm workers resort to alcohol abuse, which often interferes with their productivity, especially around weekends and holidays, thereby making labour unreliable and challenging to manage for small-scale farmers. This poor behavioural pattern of alcohol abuse amongst the farming communities has deep roots in South Africans' agricultural history, including "the dop" system wherein farm workers were partially paid with alcohol (May *et al.*, 2019:3701). This is exacerbated by the fact that small-scale farmers do not rely on own families for farm labour; like it was the case in the past; as they send young, energetic, and educated family members with a high opportunity cost for wage labour, leaving behind the elderly, women, and children at the farms to continue with farming (Zantsi, 2023, pp. 426-436).

2.3.5 Inadequate risk management practices

Small-scale farmers often farm under unfavourable climatic conditions, which adversely affect productivity and sustainability because they lack comprehensive insurance coverage against such conditions. According to Touch *et al.* (2024:122536), unfavourable climatic conditions, including extreme events such as droughts, wildfires, floods, and heatwaves, have compounded other management challenges faced by small-scale farmers, threatening food security and livelihoods. However, some small-scale farmers employ scientific practices as risk-management measures to mitigate unfavourable conditions.

In a study conducted by Mokhaukhau *et al.* (2020:45-51) on 40 small-scale vegetable farmers in Limpopo province, South Africa, it was found that most of these farmers use crop rotation, pesticides, and forward contracts as risk management strategies against identified past attacks and unfavourable climatic conditions.

However, when it comes to financial risks, most small-scale farmers have limited insurance coverage for unforeseen events. Vigano and Castellani (2020: 101475) have found that, in addition to limited access to finance, the government subsidies and

disaster relief grants received by small-scale farmers have a significant negative impact on the demand for insurance products for their farming businesses.

2.3.6 Insufficient record-keeping systems

Small-scale farmers often struggle to assess the success of their farming management, as the saying goes, “you cannot manage what you cannot measure, and you cannot measure what you do not record.” Malusi *et al.* (2022:659-675) found that most small-scale farmers rely on memory rather than formal record-keeping systems, which often results in inadequate monitoring and evaluation of enterprise progress and profitability due to inaccurate data on sales income and input costs. However, low levels of education and skills gaps in record-keeping are cited as contributory causes of insufficient record-keeping systems.

Ashley-Dejo (2023:47-56) further claimed, in a study on factors influencing the choice of record-keeping among small-scale fish farmers in Oseun State, Nigeria, that farmers with higher levels of education and more years of farming experience were more productive and had a better understanding of markets, resulting in improved accuracy in farm recordkeeping. In addition, Muhammed *et al.* (2020) found, in a study analysing farm recordkeeping practices, that, in addition to an inadequate understanding of the significance of record-keeping systems, most small-scale farmers claim they do not have time for recordkeeping.

The age of small-scale farmers was found to be another important factor revealed in studies, which plays a critical role in having proper record-keeping systems in their farming operations. For instance, in a survey on the development of a record-keeping database for smallholder sheep farming systems, Chiwawa (2019: iii) found a positive correlation between age and farmers' willingness to use the database. The younger the farmer, the more willing they were to use the database. In addition, the methods small-scale farmers use to keep records contribute to the practice of record-keeping. Using pen and paper is found to be challenging, monotonous, and tiresome for farmers with a high level of literacy. At the same time, record-keeping remains a management challenge for small-scale farmers with a low level of literacy (Chiwawa, 2019: iii).

2.3.7 Limited adoption of technology

Small-scale farming is a cornerstone of agriculture, particularly in developing countries like South Africa. However, growth in human populations increases demand for food, making agriculture critical. Still, farm productivity was negatively affected by changes in economic forces and climatic conditions driven by greenhouse gas emissions, such as global warming (Abegunde *et al.*, 2019, p. 195). These changes do not exempt small-scale farmers in South Africa.

As the saying goes, if you do not adapt, you die. Agriculture has had to respond to the challenges of the 21st century by adopting and utilising technology that offers solutions to improve farm productivity and resilience and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. As stated by Mizik (2021:1096) and Petros *et al.* (2025:815), the adoption of technology involves the use of Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) technology. Hussain *et al.* (2022:319-338) define CSA as a collection of technologies and practices that concurrently increase farm productivity and financial returns, improve climate change adaptation, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Small-scale farmers have not always found technology to be a viable economic option due to the management challenges they face. Despite this, adopting technology can help them improve their farming practices and productivity, such as increasing crop yields and livestock reproductive efficiency (Smidt & Jokonya, 2022:558-584). According to Ogunyiola *et al.* (2022:411-426), most small-scale farmers cannot afford most CSA technologies due to their high cost. Small-scale farmers face additional limitations to technology adoption, such as a lack of institutional support in the form of funding channels, insurance programs, and robust regulatory frameworks. Furthermore, several factors, including age, education, farm size, and farm ownership, influence small-scale farmers' ability to adopt CSA practices successfully (Ogunyiola *et al.*, 2022, pp. 411-426; Petros *et al.*, 2025, p. 815).

In a study on factors influencing the adoption of Climate-Smart Agriculture practices and crop productivity among smallholder farmers in Nyimba District, Zambia, Petros *et al.* (2025:815) summarised the factors that limit the adoption of CSA technology

practices by small-scale farmers, as shown in Figure 3 below. The factors were grouped into three main clusters: cognitive, socio-economic, and institutional factors.

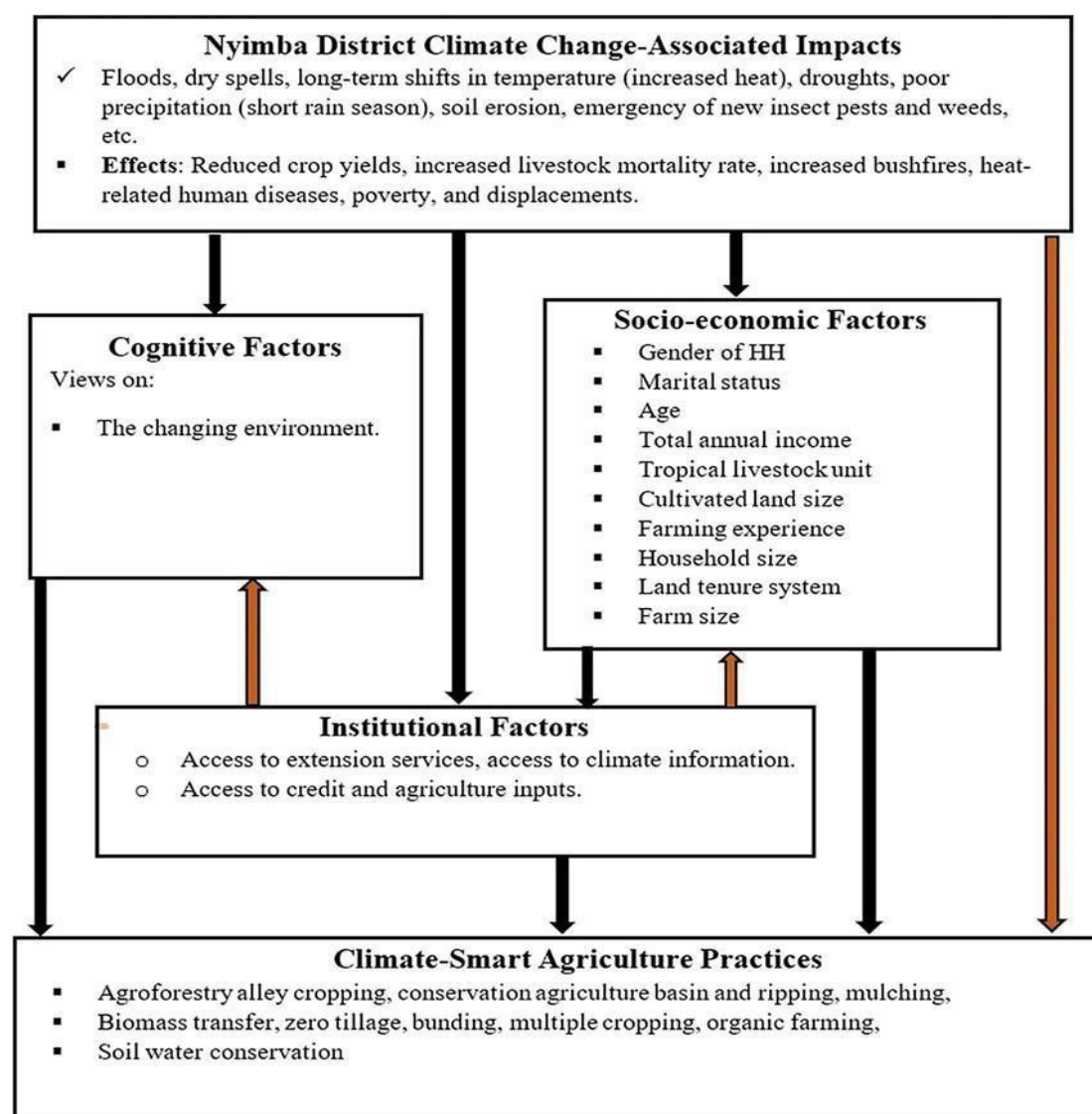


Figure 3: Factors influencing the adoption of CSA technology among small-scale farmers (Petros *et al.*, 2025, p. 815)

2.3.8 Inadequate government support

The majority of South African small-scale farmers receive assistance from the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Land Reform and Rural Development (DLRRD) in the early phases of their farming operations. The small-scale farmers who receive government assistance are primarily those who have benefited from land reform. It is crucial to take cognisance that not all small-scale farmers have benefited from land reform, as some have purchased their properties privately. In

addition, the District Development Model was launched in 2019 to fast-track the development of local businesses at the district level, including support for small-scale farmers (Munnik, 2023). Mokgomo *et al.* (2022:1760) note that the government offers small-scale farmers a range of support services, including access to agricultural land, free production inputs, grants, extension services, specialist advice and assistance, training and capacity building, marketing, and business plan development.

However, government support programs for small-scale farmers are inadequate and limited in addressing the management challenges they face, thereby hindering their transition to commercial farming. This is attributed to the government department and relevant stakeholders' limited consultation with small-scale farmers when formulating policies and programs. As a result, there are misalignments of the policies and management challenges facing small-scale farmers (Mathinya *et al.*, 2022, pp. 139-154).

In addition, institutional inefficiencies, such as corruption, inadequate extension support, and delays in service delivery, were found to worsen the management challenge posed by inadequate government support for small-scale farmers. For instance, in 2016, the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DARDLR) developed an Agri-Park Master Business Plan with specified 10-year strategic objectives, aiming to commercialize small-scale farmers within Dr. Kenneth Kaunda. Still, it could not be implemented (DALRRD, 2016).

Rusenga (2022:125-150) further claims that the South African government seems to set up small-scale farmers for failure through land reform policy, which is based on an agribusiness model, whereby the aim is to contribute to economic development, significant-scale job creation, and increasing rural income, by promoting large-scale commercial production in the manner that the former land owners did, whilst disregarding the management challenges that face the small-scale farmers. Hence, it appears that the government imposes its own political and economic agendas on small-scale farmers, expecting them to adopt commercial practices without considering their perspectives, managerial competencies, and financial situations. For instance, in one case study at Tzaneen in Limpopo province by Rusenga (2022:125-150), where small-scale farmers (referred to as land reform beneficiaries) were

allocated 165 ha- fruit orchard farm as an ongoing concern, they failed to maintain productivity according to the fruit industry norms due to limited financial resources, as supported by DLRRD. However, they could improve their livelihoods by producing vegetables with part of their own funds from off-farm incomes, a move DALRRD officials initially opposed.

2.4 RESEARCH GAP

The existing literature documents the management challenges faced by small-scale farmers, including limited business and marketing skills, limited access to finance, ineffective labour management, inadequate risk management strategies, insufficient record-keeping systems, limited adoption of technology, and inadequate government support.

However, most studies (like Kiros and Meshesha (2022:2035043), Petros *et al.* (2025:815), and Zantsi (2023: 426-436) investigated and assessed small-scale farmers' management challenges in isolation, without exploring how the interaction of these challenges affects small-scale farmers. As a result, there has been a notable gap in the literature on empirical evaluation of how existing support systems are integrated (i.e., access to finance, markets, record-keeping, risk management, capacity building, government, and stakeholder support into a development model) to enable small-scale farmers to overcome management challenges they face over time.

There are few studies on data to track the impact and effectiveness of intervention programs by relevant stakeholders across districts and provinces in South Africa. For instance, there is limited research on intervention programmes that aim to address the limited managerial capabilities and skills of the small-scale farmers. Another gap has been lying in the limited perceptions of small-scale farmers themselves in both the literature and policies, as scholars (e.g., Rusenga (2022:125-150) and Mathinya *et al.* (2022) have noted limited consultation between farmers and policymakers. Lastly, there has been no research on how small-scale farmers in Dr Kenneth Kaunda District are adopting technology. For instance, one of the latest studies on factors influencing the adoption of technology among small-scale farmers was conducted in Zambia by Petros *et al.* (2025:815).

2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In the literature review, a hybrid of two theoretical frameworks was identified to underpin the factors contributing to the management challenges faced by small-scale farmers in the Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality. i.e., Sustainable Livelihood Theory (SLT), and Institutional Theory (IT). The study had limitations in terms of time and resources, and it could not fully explore and cover all the management challenges faced by small-scale farmers in Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality. Moreover, there were numerous underlying causal factors for each management challenge. For instance, there were approximately 14 factors that influenced the adoption of technology among small-scale farmers (Petros *et al.*, 2025, p. 815). As a result, the number of key management challenges to explore was limited to eight (limited business management skills, limited marketing skills, limited access to finance, ineffective labour management, inadequate risk management strategies, insufficient record-keeping systems, limited adoption of technology, and inadequate government support).

2.6 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

Numerous studies have highlighted the economic significance of small-scale farmers worldwide, particularly in terms of creating job opportunities, alleviating poverty, and ensuring food security. As a result, governments take this sector seriously by investing an enormous amount of financial and human capital in the development of small-scale farmers to convert them into sustainable commercial businesses (ILO,2024; Masuku, 2021, pp. 50-63; Mathinya *et al.*, 2022, pp. 139-154; Muzekenyi *et al.*,2023: 23026 - 23038; Prokop *et al.*,2019).

In most cases, a small-scale farmer is typically the sole manager and owner of a farming business entity in a self-employment setting, as opposed to larger enterprises that have multiple managers for specific management functions. This implies that in small-scale farming, all managerial responsibilities and duties are typically carried out by a single individual. As a result, the economic success of a farming business depends on the managerial, problem-solving, and decision-making skills of one person, in what is referred to as “one man’s concern”. However, in most instances,

small-scale farmers lack basic, practical experience in holistic farm management and relevant skills in that field (Prokop *et al.*, 2019), underscoring the need to explore the management challenges they face in the Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the researchers conducted an extensive literature review. They highlighted that numerous studies have documented the economic significance of small-scale farmers worldwide, particularly in creating job opportunities, alleviating poverty, and ensuring food security. In most cases, small-scale farmers are the sole owners and managers of a farming business in a self-employed setting. In contrast, larger enterprises have multiple managers for specific management functions.

In this chapter, the researchers focused on the methodology, design, and methods used to explore the challenges faced by small-scale farmers in a local district in South Africa. Given the nature of this study, an interpretivist research paradigm and an exploratory research design guided the methods used. Saturation plus two was reached at 10 farmers.

Hence, the sample for this study comprised of 10 small-scale farmers from the Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality, selected purposively based on their insights and experiences. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews using an Interview Guide designed in line with the research objectives and questions. The analysis of collected data was conducted using the thematic method and the Atlas. ti software was used as a data analysis tool. The data analysis was conducted in a manner that ensured trustworthiness, credibility, and adherence to the study's ethical principles. The entire research methodology was presented in an organised fashion, applying the research onion approach (illustrated in Figure 4), in which the onion was peeled from the outermost layer (research philosophy) to the innermost layer, data collection and analysis.

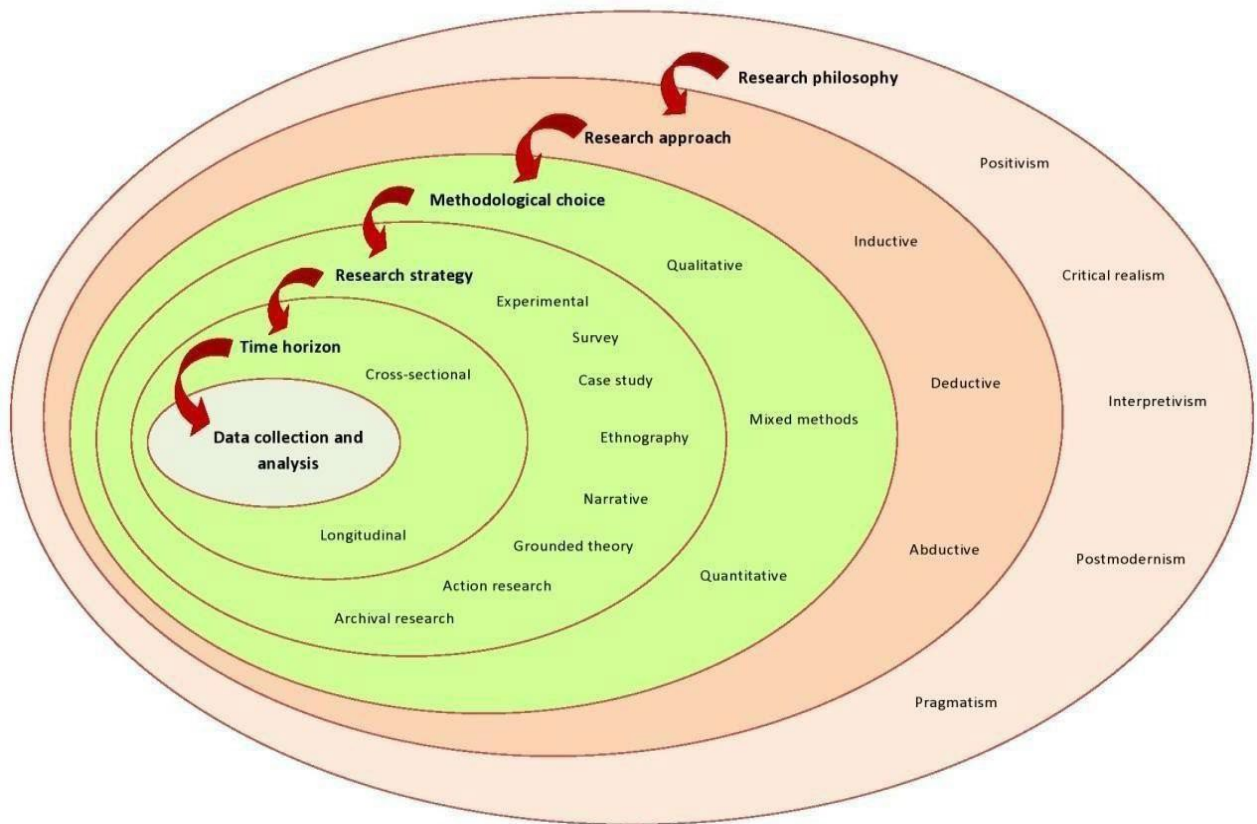


Figure 4: Illustration of the research onion approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2023, pp. 227)

3.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

This study employed the interpretivist research paradigm, which explores the role of meaning in knowledge production, highlighting the significance of meaning in knowledge creation from diverse perspectives and experiences of small-scale farmers regarding the management challenges they encounter. As a result, the interpretivist philosophy underpins the data analysis approach, through which the researcher discovers patterns and themes in participants' experiences and perspectives. This philosophy contrasts with the positivist view of truth, objectivity, and generalisation (Bryman *et al.*, 2021, pp. 29-31; William, 2024, pp. 134-138).

In addition, this study assumed an ontological philosophy, as reality was explained subjectively, given that farmers differ and continuously construct their own reality. Ontology was constructed based on the perceptions and experiences of small-scale farmers regarding the management challenges they face. An epistemological

assumption underpinned the study, which was based on gaining knowledge through semi structured interviews with participants to understand their perceptions of the management challenges they face (Bryman *et al.*, 2021, pp. 29-31).

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

There are three research approaches: inductive, deductive, and abductive approaches. Moreover, this is the second layer of the research onion. The inductive approach aims to develop a theory from specific observations, whereas the deductive approach tests existing theories through research. This study employed an inductive approach, aiming to generate generalisations from the various management challenges faced by small-scale farmers in the Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality. The inductive approach steps are outlined in Figure 5 below.



Figure 5: Inductive approach steps (Vijayamohan, 2025)

The choice of an inductive approach for this qualitative study was justifiable, as it offered better and numerous benefits compared to other research approaches, by:

- Offering a greater comprehension of the situation and management challenges faced by small-scale farmers in the Dr. Kenneth Kaunda district.

- Giving researchers the exploratory ability to develop new theories and insights from the bottom up.
- Making it easier for researchers to focus on the actual experiences and viewpoints of small-scale farmers,
- Being a suitable approach for the development of theories, which is required for the creation of new knowledge in the field of developing agriculture (Vijayamohan, 2025).

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design served as the framework for answering the research problem. Williams (2019:27) defined research design as the set of methods and procedures used to collect and analyse measures of variables specified in the research problem. It has been an integral part of the research onion, comprising mainly three layers: methodological choices, research strategies, and time horizons.

3.4.1 Methodological choices

Research is based on three primary methods: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods, which are chosen depending on the research objectives and questions. In this study, a qualitative approach was employed to explore the experiences and perceptions of small-scale farmers regarding the management challenges they face. Numerous scholars elaborated on the contrasts between the two research methods, stating that quantitative methods are practical when general or probability information is sought on opinions, attitudes, views, beliefs, or preferences, and when variables are linked to hypotheses.

For example, through quantitative methods, it could be determined what percentage of the small-scale farming population faced management challenges, and the distribution by age, gender, marital status, level of education, and other factors. In contrast, qualitative research methods are invaluable for answering questions about meaning, experiences, and perceptions, most often from participants' viewpoints, which cannot be quantified (Bryman *et al.*, 2021, pp. 29-31; Hammerberg *et al.*, 2016, pp. 498-501). As such, a qualitative method was deemed more appropriate for this study, as it aimed to explore the perceptions and experiences of small-scale farmers regarding the management challenges they face.

3.4.2 Research strategy

A research strategy was a plan a researcher followed when conducting a study, serving as a roadmap for the entire research process. This ensured that all aspects of the study, as reflected in a research onion, aligned with the research aim of exploring the management challenges faced by small-scale farmers in the Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality. There are numerous research strategies employed in research, including surveys, Case studies, Ethnography, Grounded Theory, Archival research, Action research, Phenomenological Research, and Descriptive research design (Tengeli, 2020).

The descriptive research design was deemed appropriate for this study, as it aimed to gather data on management challenges from the perspectives of small-scale farmers.

Creswell and Creswell (2023:227) describe descriptive research design, whereby researcher can get close to the data and gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon; without necessarily focusing on the study of the lived experiences (like in phenomenological inquiries); or exploring the culture of small-scale farmers (like in ethnographic research), or developing theory (like in grounded theory method). As a result, the use of a descriptive research strategy in this study could yield findings that improve farming management capabilities and practices. In addition, meaningful responses from interviews with small-scale farmers about their perceptions and experiences with management challenges they faced were going to inform the development of policies, intervention programs, and capacity-building initiatives tailored to their needs (Villamin *et al.*, 2024).

3.4.3 Time horizons

There are two types of time horizons, as indicated in the research onion: longitudinal and cross-sectional. Alamgeer (2023) describes the cross-sectional time horizon as a particular point in time at which a researcher collects data to study the characteristics of a population. In contrast, a longitudinal time horizon is a period during which data are collected at different intervals over a more extended period to examine changes in the characteristics of the population, such as attitudes, behaviors, or trends (Alamgeer, 2023).

In this study, a cross-sectional time horizon was employed to collect data from 15 small-scale farmers sampled from Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality, as management challenges faced by small-scale farmers were explored at a specific point in time. The study's time horizon was indicated in the schedule, as outlined in Table 1 (Chapter 1).

3.5 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

Several methods are used for sampling participants in qualitative research. These include Snowball sampling, volunteer sampling, purposive sampling, and theoretical sampling (Gill, 2020, pp. 579-581). The use of an appropriate sampling technique is essential to enhancing the rigour and credibility of qualitative research. Notably, the sampling techniques employed in qualitative research are typically non-random or non-probability sampling methods.

However, the sampling technique is linked with sample size and data saturation. For this study, purposive sampling was employed, as 10 small-scale farmers were selected and recruited based on their farming experience and insights, meeting the specified inclusion criteria. Tajik *et al.* (2024) describe purposive sampling as a purposeful selection based on relevance to the research question, enabling researchers to gain deep insights into complex phenomena, such as the management challenges faced by small-scale farmers.

Purposive sampling was chosen given its descriptive qualities, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. In selecting and recruiting participants, awareness was maintained of how this method may affect the findings and the credibility of the entire study (Champel *et al.*, 2020). Transferability was enhanced by the way participants were identified and selected for the study, as the depth and richness of the information gathered will impact the transferability of the findings to other farmers. Dependability was enhanced by the description of the participants, who were selected using explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria as outlined in Chapter 1 of this document. Moreover, the approved recruitment strategy was used. Confirmability was enhanced by the provision of the rationale for the choice of inclusion and exclusion criteria for this study (Champel *et al.*, 2020).

In addition, the purposive sampling technique offers several benefits, including cost efficiency, flexibility, and the ability to target information-rich cases. However, the technique is often criticized for limited generalisability, as it focuses on a small sample size (Jajik *et al.*, 2023). The benefits and drawbacks of purposive sampling are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Benefits and drawbacks of purposive sampling (drafted from Tajik *et al.* (2023).

No	Benefits	Drawbacks
1	The purposive sampling method is cost- and time-efficient, as it eliminates the need to sample large numbers of small-scale farmers.	Purposive sampling is limited in its generalizability, as the sample may not accurately represent the broader population of small-scale farmers.
2	It has a targeted approach to selecting participants who are knowledgeable and experienced in small-scale farming, thereby providing rich, relevant data.	Purpose sampling is considered vulnerable to the researchers' biases.
3	The method provides flexibility in research design, allowing the researcher to adjust the sampling strategy as they gain more understanding of the research context.	Purposive sampling is not acknowledged as statistically valid

However, despite its drawbacks, the purposive sampling technique allowed the researcher to gain a deep understanding of the situation and the perceptions of small-scale farmers in Dr Kenneth Kaunda District regarding the management challenges they faced.

Sample size

The sample size in qualitative research is typically small, often employing purposive sampling. However, according to Bekele and Ago (2022:42-50), the determination of sample size depends on numerous factors, including research objectives, research questions, university committee requirements, the nature

of the participants, available resources and time, and the researcher's experience with qualitative research, among others.

In this study, 15 small-scale farmers were recruited and included in the study. The sample size was justified, as the study focused on participants with in-depth farming experience and knowledge. However, it was believed that 10 participants were enough to reach data saturation (Bekele & Ago, 2022:42-50; Brynman *et al.*, 2021:14). Data saturation is described as the point at which no new data or themes are emerging from the data sets, and this is an acceptable methodological principle and determinant of sample size in qualitative research (Saunders *et al.*, 2018, pp. 1893-1907) and in this study it was reached at 10 participants.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

Data in qualitative research are collected using a range of techniques, including semi-structured interviews, field notes, observations, and focus groups. Bryman *et al.* (2021:326) describe observation as a data collection technique used to systematically observe participants' behaviour, based on a schedule of categories. Semi-structured interviews as a data collection method whereby a researcher asks participants questions face-to-face, by telephone, and online, while focus group discussions are a data collection technique with a small group of participants to discuss a specific topic, usually guided by a moderator using a questioning route (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021, pp. 195; Bryman *et al.*, 2021).

In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with small-scale farmers in Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District who engage in a variety of enterprises, including beef cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry, field crops, and vegetables. This data collection technique was found to be more appropriate for the study than the other two methods – observations and focus groups. Semi-structured interviews helped gain a deeper understanding of participants' unique perspectives and experiences regarding the management challenges they face, including limited access to finance, inadequate marketing skills, and slow adoption of technology within the district. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in cognisance of the following critical elements:

- Ethical issues (obtaining a research permission letter from the Department of Agriculture, Ethics Approval letter from the NWU Research committee)
- Informed consent (Letters of informed consent from participants)
- Respect for the privacy of participants (maintaining data protection and privacy)
- Confidentiality (Complying with POPI Act, maintain anonymity of participants)

The supporting documents guiding the semi-structured interview process are included in Annexure A. Additionally, field notes were taken during and immediately after the observations and interviews. These include descriptions of the setting, participant behaviour, tone of responses, informal conversations, and the researcher's own reflections. The purpose of taking field notes during data collection is to enhance the depth and credibility of qualitative data by providing contextual details, capturing nonverbal cues, and supporting the interpretation of participants' perspectives. The use of both observations and field notes, therefore, helps validate or challenge the verbal accounts gathered through interviews by capturing non-verbal accounts (Bryman *et al.*, 2021, pp. 312-313).

Data collection challenges

A contact list of 30 small-scale farmers was obtained from the District Department of Agriculture, which acted as the gatekeepers. However, data saturation was reached after interviewing 10 participants. There were numerous challenges experienced during the data collection process, namely, the unreachable contact numbers of some small-scale farmers, changes in appointments due to unforeseen circumstances, and the concerns of some farmers that the researcher might compromise biosecurity standards at their farms, following the outbreak of diseases like foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) and avian flu.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

Data analysis in qualitative research involves systematically organising, coding, and interpreting collected data to identify patterns, themes, and meanings relevant to

research objectives and questions (Bryman *et al.*, 2021, pp. 365-367). To achieve the latter, several methods can be employed, including thematic analysis, content analysis, the constant comparative method, and coding procedures. There are numerous Computer-Aided Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) software programs available on the market, commonly used for analyzing qualitative data. These include ATLAS.ti, Nvivo, Dedoose, QAA Miner Lite, etc. (Saldana,2021). In this study, ATLAS.ti software was used to apply a thematic data analysis method to identify, analyze, and describe patterns; name and refine themes; and write a report on the management challenges faced by small-scale farmers. The following steps were followed to ensure a systematic, credible, and rigorous analysis of qualitative data collected.

Step 1: Data familiarisation

All interviews were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim. The researcher read and reread transcripts alongside field notes and observation records to become immersed in the data and gain an initial understanding of emerging issues (Bryman *et al.*,2021:365-367, Saldaña, 2021)

Step 2: Initial coding

Using manual coding and Atlas. The researcher conducted open coding by breaking down the data into small, meaningful units and labeling them with codes that reflected the content (Saldaña, 2021). This step enabled the identification of issues relevant to the management challenges faced by small-scale farmers, including limited business management, inadequate risk management strategies, labour issues, limited access to finance, and restricted market access.

Step 3: Generating categories and themes

The codes generated in Step 1 were examined to identify patterns, similarities, and differences, and related codes were grouped into categories and subcategories (Saldaña, 2021). As a result, this step facilitated the development of structured categories relevant to the study, such as limited business management capabilities, limited access to finance and markets, marketing

challenges, inadequate government support, and limited adoption and use of technology, among others.

Step 4: Thematic analysis

The steps for conducting a thematic analysis of qualitative data are outlined in Chapter One.

Step 5: Content analysis

The content was analysed to determine the frequency and the emphasis participants placed on specific management challenges. This added depth to data analysis by aggregating recurring management challenges, e.g., the number of small-scale farmers who mention the lack of proper record-keeping systems.

Step 6: Constant comparative method

The constant comparative method was applied throughout the analysis by comparing data across participants, data sources (interview audio recordings, transcripts, field notes, and observation records), and emerging categories to refine themes, thereby ensuring consistency in interpretation.

Step 7: Interpretation and reporting

The last step of data analysis involved interpreting the themes related to the research questions and the context of small-scale farming in Dr Kenneth Kaunda District. This interpretation considered how identified management challenges affect small-scale farmers, their perspectives, and the implications for policy and practice in supporting small-scale farmers.

3.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the research methodology employed to explore the management challenges faced by small-scale farmers in Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District, utilising the research onion approach, which involves peeling layer after layer of the research process until the collected data are analysed. A qualitative method was

adopted, guided by an interpretivist inductive approach, to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions of management challenges they face. The figure describing the inductive approach steps is included (Figure 2).

The research design was explained, with a focus on a descriptive, cross-sectional time-horizon design to guide an exploratory study of the management challenges faced by small-scale businesses in the district. The target population, sampling technique (purposive sampling method, its drawbacks and benefits), and data collection techniques (semi-structured interviews, field notes, and observations) were described in detail. This chapter also outlined the data analysis process, which involved systematic coding procedures and thematic analysis using CAQDAS (Atlas.ti software), content analysis, and the constant comparative method. Besides the research methodology outlined, the crucial issues considered in conducting the research were research ethics and trustworthiness, as described in detail in Chapter One.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on the research methodology applicable to this study. This chapter presents the results of semi-structured interviews conducted with small-scale farmers in the Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District. The objective of the analysis was to explore and understand the data on management challenges small-scale farmers face in their day-to-day farming operations. This data was then analysed using a thematic analysis, thereby enabling the researcher to organize the participants' experiences and perceptions into major themes that reflect the main challenges impeding their becoming commercial businesses.

4.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The study involved 10 small-scale farmers, the number of participants the researcher interviewed through semi-structured interviews, having reached data saturation, as no new challenges were identified. In terms of race, all participants were African; three were female and seven were male, given the nature of farming work. Participants' ages range from 43 to 75 years, with the majority in their mid-60s. Participants farm with diverse enterprises – beef cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry, field crops, and vegetables.

4.3 THEMATIC PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the data analysis were presented in accordance with the themes identified by the researcher, providing answers to the research aims and questions. Themes and subthemes on management challenges faced by small-scale are presented below (Table 4).

Table 4: Thematic analysis results

Themes	Sub-Themes	Category	Codes	Quote	Participants
Limited business management skills	Lack of financial planning Limited knowledge	Limited knowledge	Know-how	"And if you check, things that you are not doing the right way because of the lack of knowledge are the ones that are becoming a hindrance in terms of you progressing or actually making a meaningful contribution in terms of your profit"	PB,PC,PD,P E,PF,PJ, PK (7)
Limited marketing skills	Lack of marketing plan Inconsistent market supply High marketing cost-commission	Limited knowledge	Marketing	"When we started, we did not have a proper market for our chickens, and the market referred to by a government official was not suitable because they promised to buy R40 per unit of our chickens, which was too little"	PB,PE, PJ,PK,PT,P S (6)
Limited access to finance	High input cost	Insufficient capital	Finance	"I am stressed by the challenges I face, and the main challenge is limited finances. I use cash to farm. I do not want to apply for loans for I am afraid to lose the farm if I can fail to repay"	PA,PB,PC,P D,PE,PF,PJ, PK,PT,PS (10)
	Lack of mechanisation				
	Dependence on grants			"I depend on the government for grants, and elsewhere I do not qualify for loans because of my age"	
	Insufficient collateral				
	Not meeting credit qualifying criteria				
Limited record-keeping systems	Incomplete records	Limited knowledge	Records	"We use a bookkeeper for record-keeping"	PA,PB,PC,P D,PJ, PK (6)
	Dependence on family members & bookkeeper				

Inadequate labour management	High employee turnover	Limited labour management skills	Farm workers	“ The problem I have is farm workers from South Africa, they do not stay and month-ends after they receive pays they become uncontrollable due to use of alcohol, I now prefer people from outside the country”	PA, PD,PT,PS (4)
	Poor supervision				
	Limited discipline				
Inadequate risk management strategies	Limited risk mitigation measures	Insufficient capital	Insurance	“I do not have insurance because I cannot afford it.”	PA,PB,PC,P D,PE,PF,PJ, PK,PT,PS (10)
	High stock theft rate associated with inadequate security		Security	“Our main threat at the farm is stock theft. Last time, 20 cattle and 35 sheep were stolen.”	PA,PB,PC,P D,PE,PF,PJ, PK,PT,PS (10)
Limited adoption of technology	Low affordability for technology	Insufficient capital	Affordability	“ I cannot afford to have technology at the farm like security cameras and so forth, and the only thing I have is dogs in case of alert for burglary.”	PA,PB,PC,P D,PF,PJ, PT,PS (8)
	Limited knowledge of technological products	Limited knowledge	Knowledge		
Inadequate government support	Insufficient grant support	Inadequate support	Grants	“Government is giving me a RECAP grant, but they assist me according to their terms and conditions. For example, they brought me a mentor without checking with me. Mind you, I have close to 30 years of experience in farming, so what is the work of a mentor going to be?”	PA,PB,PC,P D,PF,PJ, PK,PT,PS (9)
	Limited consultation on policy formulations		Consultation		

	Limited farm visits by extension officers		Extension services	“Government should provide full support, including regular progress monitoring, and they must not just buy us inputs and forget about us.”	PA,PB,PC,P D,PF,PJ,PT, PS (8)
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* Participants are identified as PA, PB, PC for Participant A, Participant B, and Participant, C for ethical reasons.

The participants described the characteristics of a small-scale farmer as outlined below.

- A small-scale farmer is a person who owns agricultural land or has access to it.
- A person who keeps livestock and/or cultivates crops for his or her livelihood.
- A person who is passionate about farming, demonstrating his or her love and passion by going to a farm daily or staying close to his or her animals and crops by residing on a farm.
- A person who is resilient and refuses to give up when faced with numerous challenges

4.3.1 Limited business management skills

The small-scale farmers indicated the significance and value of gaining practical knowledge to enhance their management skills and capabilities in farming. One participant (PE) called this typical knowledge – the knowledge of the know-how, and he stated it like:

“ Because the manner in which the commercial guys are doing things and the emerging guys are doing things is completely different. So, but the gap is generated by the knowledge of know-how. So if that can also be considered as something that requires to be attended to, I think it will assist, especially the emerging farmers. Because, look, there are a number of things that we are doing wrong. I remember, well, I was at, I started here with 90 sows long ago. And, but we did not do the things the right way. And if you check, things that you are not doing the right way because of the lack of knowledge are the ones that are becoming a hindrance in terms of

you progressing or actually making a meaningful contribution in terms of your profit. Because otherwise, you are not in business. If you are not going to check whether you're in profit or not. And I can raise it like that in this hour because things like your feed conversion ratio. A small-scale farmer is not looking at that . He's not aware of that. And things like your vaccinations, the knowledge of vaccination, what are you vaccinating against, you know, and the processes that needs to be followed from each and every stage because you are starting by inseminating there are a number of things that are happening. Your heat detections and when to inseminate, when the pig does what, that thing that thing is not being taken care of. So, once we are able to capture the knowledge of know-how in the but the other challenge is this: you might actually need to address it, but it is costly, And as a small or emerging farmer, the costs are going to kill you”

It is evident from the quotation that “not knowing what you do not know” is one of the challenges, reflecting limited business management skills that hinder small-scale farmers from transitioning to commercial farming. As a result, there are numerous fundamental things that small-scale farmers do not know, which can improve enterprise profitability by minimising operating costs, such as calculating the feed conversion ratio in livestock farming. This finding is supported by Pandey *et al.* (2024) and Neriath *et al.* (2024:119 127), who posited that small-scale farmers struggle due to limited business and production planning capabilities.

4.3.2 Limited marketing skills

Limited marketing skills amongst small-scale farmers hinder their profitability in their farming operations, and these manifest in several ways, such as the failure of small-scale farmers in price negotiations for their products in markets (Kamarulzaman & Khairuddin, 2021, pp. 211–228; Ndlovu & Masuku, 2021, pp. 50-63). As a result, small-scale farmers become price takers in the marketing of their farm products, a finding of the study. In most cases, small-scale farmers start their farming businesses without securing a suitable market for their products. For instance, in one chicken business, small-scale farmers were assisted by the Department of Agriculture with inputs for 5,000 broilers, i.e., day-old chicks, feed, medication, etc., but a suitable market was not secured. The market introduced to them by a Department of

Agriculture official was not suitable for small-scale farmers, as the buyers offered to pay R40 per bird, which was below the operating cost per bird. The small-scale farmers refused to sell to the identified formal market, and on the other

hand, they (farmers) struggled to sell all the chickens on time to their target market, which was a niche market of the neighbouring community residing in a township. As a result, the small-scale farmers incurred losses and ended up being owed chicken money that they could not recover from the customers. This led them to downscale their production from 5,000 to 2,000, later to 1,000, and now they can only rear 500 broilers per cycle.

In addition, it was found that, besides limited marketing skills, the prices producers get for their products are a challenge, affecting the profitability and sustainability of their farming enterprises. In one instance, a pig producer expressed his concern that the price he gets for his pigs from the abattoir is not attractive compared to the retail shelf price paid by consumers for the same products, which are sold at butcheries and supermarkets. For example, the producer pork price was estimated at R35 per kg, while at retailers, consumers pay R80 – R100 per kg for the same pork products. PE expressed his perception this way:

"I need to ensure that these animals that I'm having are healthy. These animals that I'm having, they're eating. This animal that I'm having, they are well looked at in terms of labor and everything else. Right? Now, when I take these animals of mine, when they reach a stage where they can go to market, I load them on the truck and they go to market. How much do I get currently now? I think we are at R35 per kg, carcass weight. Now, I take them to the abattoirs. The abattoirs take them to the retailers. Go and check a pork belly, or anything that you can find there. How much is it at the shelf? It's double, if not triple the amount, right? But who's taking all the risk? But now the second thing is that we are told by the market how much they are prepared to pay us. We are not the price givers; we are price takers. Now, the challenge with that is you are the one who will take the risk and show that you are producing well. You need to have knowledge. Now, the person who comes and buy this thing from you or from the abattoir that you are supplying, he does not have to have the knowledge of how the pigs are raised. You know, he has no knowledge how to treat pigs or piglets when they're sick. That thing is known to you, but you are the one who carries the pain. You are told not to say, okay, we think that this is how much we can give you, whereas almost 80% of the work is done by you. But

that person takes a product, put it in the shelf. He decides how much he can actually want that product to be sold for. Not you.”

Another subtheme identified is the consistency of supply of the products by small-scale farmers to the formal market, which is challenging given due to the small size of the production. As a result, the small-scale farmers tend to lose access to the market, as they are not consistent and reliable compared to the commercial counterpart. One participant has expressed the frustration this way:

“You know. Now, in this situation, the abattoirs are cutting out the small guys because they send animals to the abattoir only once every three weeks or once a month, as they do not deliver to the abattoir as frequently as the commercial ones. Commercial ones, maybe you deliver twice a week. And serious volumes. So it is clear that this abattoir is not going to risk losing this client that delivers twice a week because of the client that delivers once every three weeks or every three months.”

In addition, another participant (PD), who is a small-scale pig farmer, expressed her perception on the challenge of maintaining consistency of market supply in this manner:

“As a small-scale farmer, I'm farming with pigs. 20 sow unit is so small. So, as a small-scale farmer, the difficulties or challenges that I'm facing here are related to growth. I can't grow because of the hectares I'm farming. Again, the structure, the infrastructure, and lack of resources, because even if I want to, I can't go bigger because of limited space and limited structure. And the market wants the consistency “.

The theme of limited marketing skills and subthemes such as the lack of a marketing plan reflect the inherent problem of small-scale farmers' original purpose: producing food for household consumption and selling surplus to the market. And the finding aligns with the literature by Ndlovu and Masuku (2021:50-63), who further posited that most small-scale farmers initially established their farming enterprises with the primary

goal of household food production rather than a customer-centric commercial purpose, resulting in a poor marketing orientation.

4.3.3 Limited access to finance

There are several reasons why small-scale farmers do not expand their businesses. These include limited access to finance, failure to meet the qualifying criteria set by banks, such as age, and inadequate collateral. On the other hand, they fail to get government grants. This is one of the major challenges faced by small-scale farmers, which hinders their access to other resources and capital goods, thereby hindering the commercialisation of small-scale farming.

The majority of small-scale farmers interviewed expressed concern about this challenge, as it impedes the full utilisation of their farm resources, such as planting all arable fields or using poultry and pig housing to their full capacity. In the case of crop production, the financial situation of a small-scale farmer may be worsened by lower yields due to unforeseen, unfavourable climatic conditions, such as drought. For instance, participant C experienced poor maize yields on his farm over a period of two successive production years due to drought, which affected 25 hectares out of 100 hectares he has.

Besides government finance, there are institutions that also play a role in providing finance to small-scale farmers. These include banks such as Land Bank and commercial banks, as well as agribusiness companies that have established Emerging Farmer Support Programs that collaborate with the government to support small-scale farmers. For instance, the government collaborates with the Land Bank, which provides the finance product called Blended Finance, comprising 50% grant and 50% loan.

However, some participants preferred to apply for government grants rather than for business loans offered by Land Bank and commercial banks, for several reasons. One participant expressed fear of losing his farm due to the possibility of failing to repay the loan if his farming business does not go as planned. He has used his pension to buy the farm, and he is too old to borrow capital for the production activities.

As a strategy to deal with limited access to finance, some farmers use their own financial means, like old-age social grants, to cover the costs of living rather than depend on small-scale farming, and some make use of personal credit cards to finance salaries and other farming needs, like buying livestock and production inputs.

Participant J who is also a pensioner, put it like this:

“It is three of us, my two daughters and I, rearing 500 chickens for two months because our customers prefer big chickens. We pay ourselves R1 000 per person after two months, after selling chickens, and we cope with this kind of situation as we also depend on other sources of income like old age, social grants”.

4.3.4 Ineffective labour management

Employees are an integral part and an asset for every organisation, including small-scale farming. In farms, it is found that the majority of small-scale farmers supply their own labour. In most cases, men work together with their spouses and children, as well as a few people from outside. The economies of scale are found to be the major contributory factor and a challenge, which stems from limited finances. In one instance, a small-scale farmer, an elderly man, manages more than three farming enterprises with just one person, as he cannot afford the 34 employees the farm requires.

When it comes to employee retention, small-scale farmers in South Africa face the challenge of retaining their employees. As a result, they resort to hiring employees from neighbouring countries, such as Lesotho, Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique. In addition, labour management on the farms is found to be ineffective in certain instances: when the farmers are not present, during month-ends, as some employees become too intoxicated with alcohol to work, and when people want a job but do not want to stay on the farm.

Participant F, in the instance of not being present at the farm, has put it like this:

“So sometimes I have to rely on people to do things for me. And then again, if someone is doing things for you, sometimes you can give instructions, but they don't

follow them. They do as they please, and then you find that you also, it delays your progress”.

In the instance when people want a job but do not want to stay on farms, confirming study by OECD (2023) that these isolated settings are typically less attractive to potential farm workers for employment and living due to limited access to shops, social and medical services, and schools for children. Participant S (PS) has expressed his experience this way: *“Oh, labour is not the big issue we’ve got. I mean, you know, unemployment in the country is very high, and there are so many people who want to work, you know, but unfortunately, they’re not prepared to stay on the farm, they’re not prepared to work in the farm, you know? Especially if they’re to work for a black person. So they don’t want to be managed.*

Some say this one is a black farmer. He can’t tell me what to do. “

4.3.5 Inadequate risk management practices

Agriculture is faced with diverse risks, encompassing both financial and non-financial risks that affect the sustainability and profitability of farming operations, and this is equally true for small-scale farming. Having risk mitigation measures in place is one of the effective ways of managing risks, and these include, but are not limited to, farm insurance.

It is found that almost all small-scale farmers do not have insurance for their farm properties, livestock, and crops, primarily because they are unable to afford the insurance premiums or keep up with the payments.

Inadequate risk management practices are largely attributed to limited access to finance, as small-scale farmers struggle to mitigate risks due to their limited financial resources. For instance, on one farm of participant C, providing drinking water for the cattle is a challenge, as the cattle have to walk long distances from the grazing camps to a residential area to access water. Moreover, participant C has a water canal running through the farm, but he cannot use the water for irrigation, as he lacks the necessary

funds to purchase an irrigation system. As a result, measures to mitigate risk during droughts are inadequate.

4.3.6 Insufficient record-keeping systems

A small-scale farmer needs to have a basic record-keeping system to manage their farming effectively. A deeper examination of the interviews revealed that weak and inconsistent recordkeeping practices were a significant hindrance to effective farm management amongst small-scale farmers. A few participants realise that farming is a business and needs to be managed as such through a proper, structured record-keeping system. However, some participants acknowledge that they struggle to keep records due to low literacy and age, and they are assisted by their children in the family with record-keeping. Others have a bookkeeper to help with financial records. The finding aligns with studies by Ashley-Dejo (2023:47-56) and Chiwawa (2019:iii), which found a positive relationship between educational level and the choice of record-keeping system.

In addition, small-scale farmers recognised the importance of records, but they lacked the necessary skills, tools, or time to keep and maintain them. Some participants reported not having received training on recording sales income and expenses, even though they maintain essential documents, such as receipts and invoices. Other participants have confessed to submitting all the source documents to their bookkeepers, which are typically used for tax filing purposes, rather than for business decisions. As a result, small-scale farmers generally struggle to make informed decisions about their farming businesses due to a lack of proper record-keeping.

Overall, evidence suggests that although various reasons contribute to the failure of proper record-keeping, small-scale farmers are disproportionately disadvantaged in terms of benefits derived from record-keeping practices, including access to funding, planning, decision-making capacity, and improved farm performance.

4.3.7 Limited adoption of technology

Technology is a vital tool for enhancing small-scale farming management. Although it offers many benefits, its adoption among small-scale farmers is limited mainly due to financial constraints. As a result, farm safety and security are the top priorities for technology adoption. This includes safety technologies such as alarms, security cameras, and microchips on animals to prevent farm crimes, including stock theft and burglaries. However, only a few small-scale farmers have access to safety technologies, let alone advanced tools such as drones and Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) technologies, which can help farmers address challenges related to climate risks, greenhouse gas emissions, and their negative effects on farm productivity.

Besides financial constraints, other major factors that limit technology adoption include participants' age and literacy levels, lack of information about available technology products, poor network connectivity, and inadequate infrastructure, and these were validated by Petros *et al.* (2025:815) in a study on factors influencing the adoption of Climate-Smart Agriculture practices and crop productivity among smallholder farmers in Nyimba District, Zambia.

Some participants mentioned that limited financial resources hinder their growth, but ensuring their safety, assets, and animals' welfare is vital. They emphasized the importance of investing in basic security measures, such as security cameras, since stock theft is one of the major challenges, as almost all participants mentioned, confirming a study by Luvhengo and Lekunze (2017:601 -611) on how limited finances hinder the adoption of risk mitigation technologies.

For example, at one farm, there was an incident where nearly 90 pregnant ewes were stolen overnight. The culprits remain unidentified and at large, and no arrests have been made. Unfortunately, they couldn't see or hear anything because the security cameras were not working due to a power outage; however, they plan to replace the power source with a solar system.

4.3.8 Inadequate government support

A significant amount of information was collected from the participants regarding their perceptions of government support and recommendations for how the government could support them in successfully navigating their challenges and becoming commercial entities.

The government has developed policies and programs to support small-scale farmers through the establishment and resourcing of departments, such as the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). The support provided by the government is in both financial and non-financial forms, including grants and agricultural services, respectively. The majority of these farmers, in a nutshell, are a government product, placed on the farms by the government Department of Land Reform and Rural Development (DLRRD) through the PLAS programme.

When it comes to financial support, both DARD and DLRRD provide grants to small-scale farmers. All 10 farmers interviewed have received grants. Three received RECAP grants from the Department of Land Reform for infrastructure, livestock, and inputs, and seven received CASP grants from DARD for livestock and inputs.

The common perception among small-scale farmers interviewed is that government support, both financial and non-financial, is inadequate to enable them to become commercially viable businesses.

In some instances, grants were received in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, and as a result, they failed to yield the expected results. Since then, the majority of small-scale farmers have not received any support from the government, and they continue to struggle to make ends meet, let alone generate a profit, leaving them as if they are back to square one.

Most participants receive support from the government in the form of production inputs through CASP grants for maize cultivation; however, these are insufficient to cover the arable fields they have. Moreover, they have limited mechanisation capacity (tractors and implements) for sustainable crop production, which impedes their progress. However, they can only cover arable fields of 25 hectares out of 100 hectares he has in extent.

Participants who farm poultry and pigs are also found to struggle with utilising their housing to its fullest potential due to limited financial resources. For example, one participant has a broiler house that can accommodate 5,000 broilers, but she can only rear 500 birds.

Perceptions of the government's use of RECAP grants suggest that government officials make decisions about how to support small-scale farmers without consulting them. For instance, one participant found it concerning that he received a RECAP grant from DARD, but the government assigned a mentor whom they identified and appointed for him. However, this small-scale farmer has close to 25 years of experience in farming. Moreover, they appointed an engineer to assist with the installation and repair of the camp fencing, although the farmer can do the fencing himself if he could only purchase the necessary fencing material. The main concern of the participant is that he worries he may not fully enjoy the benefits of the grant, as part of the grant will be used to pay for a mentor and an engineer. This finding of limited consultation by government when formulating policies and programs is also confirmed by Rusenga, 2022:125-150; Mathinya *et al.*, 2022).

When it comes to providing non-financial support, the government is found to fall short. This involves the extension services and other agricultural services that the government can offer to small-scale farmers, such as capacity building, linking farmers to formal markets, and expertise on various farming aspects, which can help them enhance their farming productivity.

Here are some of the remarks by the participants like participant S:

"I think what the government should do they should go all out to support small-scale farmers. Because as far as I'm concerned, I think they do not take us serious. There will also be a way to monitor our progress on the farms. And what is the last time that they monitored the progress on these farms? And sometimes they give you something, and then they just forget about you. Or they just provide inputs and don't follow up. Now I believe that, with are our extension officers? The work of the extension officers is not supposed to stay in the office for the whole day. Their work is in their field. It's visiting farmers. However, with our extension officers, they'll always be in the office, and they'll always complain about the transport, saying we can't come because we don't have

transport, only one bakkie, and so on. They have their challenges like the issue of transport or so on”

4.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings suggest that small-scale farmers in the Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District face a combination of managerial, marketing, financial, labour, and operational challenges, with limited access to finance and markets, limited knowledge, stock theft, and inadequate government support being the most mentioned issues by 80% of the participants, outlined below.

- Limited access to finance affects 90% participants in growing their small-scale farming businesses (9/10).
- All small-scale beef cattle farmers interviewed sell their cattle at auctions, where they are charged 8-10% commission fees, implying limited access to the market (6/10).
- All pig farmers interviewed complained about low producer pork prices and high pig feed costs, in relation to the retail prices paid by consumers for pork at the retail market, implying market and marketing challenges (3/3)
- The repercussions of limited knowledge of farming amongst small-scale farmers were mentioned by more than 50% of participants (7/10).
- The challenge of stock theft was mentioned by all the participants, who farm with livestock (10/10).
- All the participants expressed concerns about the inadequate nature of government support for small-scale farmers (9/10).

These challenges are interrelated and collectively impede small-scale farmers from becoming sustainable commercial businesses.

4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter presents the lived experiences and perceptions of the small-scale farmers who participated in the study, outlining the major management challenges they face, their coping mechanisms, and their recommendations for policymakers and relevant stakeholders. The insights gained from this chapter provide a basis for the conclusions and recommendations presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarises the study's conclusions and offers recommendations for tackling the management challenges faced by small-scale farmers in the Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District. Additionally, it highlights the study's limitations and proposes areas for future research. There are several similarities between the study findings discussed in Chapter 4 and the theoretical information gathered through the literature review in Chapter 2. Furthermore, the qualitative research method described in Chapter 3 was found to be more appropriate and relevant than the quantitative approach, as the lived experiences and perceptions of small-scale farmers cannot be easily quantified.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions involve synthesizing key insights from the study, including research methods, data collection, and the presentation and discussion of findings. Numerous studies have emphasized the economic importance of small-scale farmers worldwide, particularly in creating jobs, reducing poverty, and ensuring food security.

The study showed that the main challenges faced by small-scale farmers in Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District are interconnected and mutually dependent, stemming from two primary root causes – limited knowledge and insufficient capital. The study confirmed the theory from the literature review: in most instances, a small-scale farmer is the sole owner and manager of a farming operation in a self-employment setting, unlike larger businesses, which have multiple managers responsible for specific roles. This indicates that in small-scale farming, all managerial duties are usually handled by a single person. As a result, the success of a farming business depends on the managerial, problem-solving, and decision-making skills of a single individual, often referred to as "one man's concern."

However, many small-scale farmers lack basic, practical experience in holistic farm management and relevant skills, underscoring the need for intervention by key stakeholders, including the government. (ILO,2024; Masuku,2021 :50-63; Mathinya et al.,2022:139-154; Muzekenyi *et al.*,2023:23026-23038; Prokop *et al.*,2019). When

faced with limited access to finance, characterized by insufficient capital, small-scale farmers are restricted in their ability to buy production inputs, livestock, and mechanisation such as tractors and implements, obtain insurance, and adopt new technology. The government and other stakeholders, like the Land Bank, should review policies and develop financial products suitable for small-scale farmers, involving consultation with farmers themselves, especially in Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The multiple recommendations were synthesized to address the management challenges faced by small-scale farmers in Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District. Implementing these recommendations will resolve most of the challenges and improve relations between farmers and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD).

Recommendation 1: Limited business management skills

Many participants emphasized the importance of essential business management skills for running their farming operations. However, these skills are often missing among small-scale farmers, as most started farming without practical managerial or leadership knowledge and experience, which hampers their ability to develop into successful commercial ventures. As a result, many small businesses lack the resources to succeed. Additionally, more leadership and managerial responsibilities are assigned to individuals who have never managed or led any organisation or person before—covering areas such as production, finance, marketing, and personnel management—handled by one person with limited support. It is advised that small-scale farmers concentrate on developing skills and establishing management support systems that offer mentoring, coaching, and counseling to improve farm productivity and sustainability. Networking is strongly recommended for small-scale farmers, especially since they are often in remote areas.

Recommendation 2: Limited marketing skills

Almost all participants expressed dissatisfaction with the market and marketing of their products, citing factors such as market access, product pricing, and inconsistent supply. It is recommended that small-scale farmers receive essential financial

assistance and expand their production capacity to increase sales volumes and ensure a stable supply, thereby becoming more competitive and improving their chances of achieving commercial viability. Additionally, small-scale farmers should explore new market segments beyond existing markets, such as auctions, Senwes, and fresh produce markets. The latter indicates limited marketing skills, which can be improved through short courses and mentoring in agricultural marketing.

Recommendation 3: Limited access to finance

Almost all interviewed farmers emphasized the need for financing to expand and diversify their small-scale farms. However, they encounter several obstacles, including age, poor credit history, lack of collateral (since most farms are leased from the state), expectations of government grants, and fear of applying for loans. Furthermore, government grants often do not cover all farming costs. For example, one farmer received inputs to plant maize on 25 hectares of his 100-hectare farm, but this was not enough, and he also faces machinery problems. It is recommended that small-scale farmers consider looking beyond government grants and exploring the financial products offered by financial institutions.

Recommendation 4: Ineffective labour management

Participants experienced challenges with ineffective labour management at their farms, including staff shortages, retention issues, and the absconding of some farm employees on pay days. The issue of staff shortages was linked to financial constraints, as small-scale farmers could not afford the ideal number of employees, which may contribute to low staff retention on farms. However, the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL) and AgriSETA have a learnership program that helps place unemployed agricultural graduates on farms, thereby providing a source of subsidised employment for small-scale farmers. Therefore, farmers should explore how to capitalize on this opportunity to reduce staff shortages and save on labour costs.

In addition, small-scale farmers should consider hiring people who are genuinely seeking work and dismiss those who cause trouble. One participant has decided to start hiring people from neighboring countries because, in most cases, employees

from South Africa tend to abuse alcohol and leave farm work, especially during the month-ends and holidays.

Recommendation 5: Limited record-keeping systems

Small-scale farmers need to understand the importance of accurate records to ensure effective farm management. This can only be achieved through information sessions on what recordkeeping entails and its benefits in the day-to-day running of the farm. Some participants have low literacy levels, and age is not on their side when it comes to learning about structured record-keeping systems. The latter farmers should bring their children on board to assist in record-keeping practices and other aspects of farm management as part of succession planning.

Recommendation 6: Risk management practices

Most participants lack insurance for their farms, assets, and livestock, which threatens the sustainability of small-scale farmers during disasters like veld fires, floods, thunderstorms, disease outbreaks, and theft. Although comprehensive insurance costs money, it is recommended that small-scale farmers reduce risks by implementing measures such as building firebreaks and partnering with private security companies to prevent stock theft.

Recommendation 7: Limited adoption of technology

Numerous factors limit small-scale farmers in Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District from adopting technology, which align with the factors discussed in Chapter 3 of the literature review (Figure 3). However, the most common limiting factors among the participants are age, level of education, and financial constraints.

Adopting technology offers many benefits that can increase the productivity of small-scale farmers and accelerate their commercialisation. However, farmers should collaborate with tech companies that sell technological products, often using platforms like NAMPO and other agricultural shows where these products are demonstrated to farmers, including small-scale farmers. It is recommended that small-scale farmers in Dr. Kenneth Kaunda learn more about and adopt technology, and that those who

cannot do so due to age or educational level bring along their younger relatives to assist them.

Recommendation 8: Inadequate government support

This is one of the significant challenges that participants discussed extensively. In this study, government support is categorized into two types – financial and non-financial support, as explained in the previous chapter. Among the participants interviewed, while they value the government's efforts, the support they receive is not enough to help them achieve their goals, especially in reaching the commercial stage, where they can actively participate in the mainstream agricultural economy. The key takeaway from the interviews is that the relationship between small-scale farmers and the government is weak and needs improvement.

People-centric ideologies and initiatives, such as the Bathopele principle (bathopele means people first), should be revived to enhance relations between small-scale farmers and the government. This can be learned from what some organisations in the private sector have done, including the implementation of Know-Your-Customer (KYC) initiatives and the establishment of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems, with the strategic objective of enhancing customer satisfaction, thereby improving competitiveness and profitability. It is recommended that small-scale farmers should be treated as customers by government, and they need to be well-known as to their needs and challenges they face.

When it comes to support programs and policies, the government should involve small-scale farmers in developing them, not just in their implementation. This approach can significantly reduce dissatisfaction. For example, some participants are pleased to receive grants, but they remain unhappy because mentors, training providers, and engineers are assigned to them without proper consultation. Additionally, some of these farmers have nearly 30 years of farming experience, yet mentors are appointed with funds meant to benefit small-scale farmers as much as possible.

In addition, the provision of non-financial support, like extension services, needs to be improved. The majority of small-scale farmers are not satisfied with the level of extension support they receive. It is recommended that extension officers make

regular visits to small-scale farmers to monitor and evaluate progress, including those who received government production inputs, to check what they have used and how. In short, the government should follow its money to ensure that it produces planned and expected outcomes. The budget for extension officers is one area that should be reviewed and, if necessary, improved, as small-scale farmers in Dr KK District stated during interviews that extension officers lack transport or transport fuel to make regular visits to farmers.

5.4 MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are numerous findings on the study, which may be helpful in a journey to turnaround and improve the state of agricultural economy in South African, and the entire globe. This journey begins with close attention on the situation facing one small-scale farmer, whose potential to contribute towards food security and economic growth is hindered. So, the following management implications are recommended:

- (i) The small-scale farmers in Dr Kenneth Kaunda should be identified and be known as to their specific challenges and farming needs to become commercial entities.
- (ii) The small-scale farmers ought to seek out ways of improving their productivity by pay attention to their farming methods. For instance, there is need to adopt climate-smart technologies (CS) to enhance productivity amidst challenges associated with global warming.
- (iii) The skills gaps should be identified, analysed, and addressed through capacity building programs like training and mentorship, including exposing small-scale farmers in Dr KK District small-scale farmers to more advanced farming operations.
- (iv) The relationship between small-scale farmers in the district and the government should be improved, implying that extension officers should be visible at the farms of small-scale farmers. Moreover, farmers should be actively involved in the formulation of policies and programs, not only in their implementation.
- (v) The Government needs to play a leading role in stakeholder relationship management for the benefit of small-scale farmers. This entails close progress

monitoring of small-scale farmers and improving the sense of accountability of the way grants are utilised.

5.5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study had limitations because the researcher examined a limited number of challenges faced by small-scale farmers in Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District. Many challenges and their root causes affected small-scale farmers. However, due to the broad scope of the topic, limited time, and budget constraints, the researcher focused on eight key challenges deemed important and relevant to small-scale farmers in the district.

5.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE STUDY

There are close to 2.5 million small-scale farmers in South Africa with untapped potential to join the mainstream agricultural economy (Mbamba & Nsengiyumva, 2024, p. 5287). However, many interconnected challenges faced by this group of farmers hinder their success. Therefore, more research is needed in this field to develop solutions and answers. This study has covered a broad topic, focusing on eight identified challenges, without addressing the underlying causes, each of which could be a separate topic for future research. For example, challenges such as limited marketing skills, limited insurance coverage, and limited technology adoption, and their impact on the productivity and growth potential of small-scale farmers in Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District, could be explored separately in future studies.

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ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Dear Participant

You are invited to participate in a semi-structured interview for research conducted by Mr Castuff Sekgala enrolled in the MBA program at North-West University Business School, Potchefstroom campus.

The purpose of the research is “Exploring management challenges faced by small-scale farmers in Dr Kenneth Kaunda district of South Africa”. This study will explore management challenges facing small-scale farmers in a district of South Africa. Face-to-face interviews will be arranged with the selected participants, who will share their daily experiences.

This research will follow an interpretive approach to gain fresh insights into management challenges faced by small-scale farmers in a local district.

Please familiarize yourself with the attached consent document and provide a signature if you consent to participate in this study. The interview will take approximately 30-40 minutes of your time.

Protection of Personal Information Act (POPI)

The data will not include any personal identity information (for example, demographics) and if in the case where personal information or identifier is divulged by a participant, the personal information will be handled in line with the rules formulated in the **Protection of Personal Information Act (Act 4 of 2013)**.

The following is important to note in line with the Act:

- You are under no obligation to divulge your personal information (i.e., demographics, race, age, gender, etc).

- There will be no negative consequences to you if you decide not to provide personal information.
- You can request access to your details at any time to change any information if you so wish to do so.
- The researcher will secure interview recording data on Google Drive of his Google account.
- Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the data, and it will not cross the borders of South Africa.
- No conflict of interest exists between the researcher and the participants, nor do power relations exist since the researcher does not work directly with the small-scale farmers in Dr Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality of South Africa.

CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN RESEARCH

I hereby confirm that

- I voluntarily *agree to participate* in this study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I *can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question* without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I *can withdraw permission* to use data from my interview and/or written with an open-ended questionnaire, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had *the purpose and nature of the study explained to me*, and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that the interviews will be recorded, and the time will not exceed 1 hour.
- I understand that participation involves being asked questions verbally and that *the data will be used as part of the research work of the MBA program*.
- I understand that *I will not benefit directly* from participating in this research.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be *treated confidentially*.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research, my identity will remain anonymous. Anonymity will be preserved in transcripts through the use of pseudonyms and generalisation of specific details.

- I understand that under freedom of information legislation, my information will not be used for any other purpose beyond this study, and I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage.
- I understand that I am *free to contact any of the people involved in the research* to seek further clarification and information.

Agree ☐

Disagree ☐

(Please tick)

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Section 1 : To establish the characteristics of small-scale farmers in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda district.

1. How would you describe your farming operation?
2. What, in your view, does it take to be a small-scale farmer in the Dr KK district?

Section 2: To examine the management challenges experienced by small-scale farmers in the district.

1. What are the main challenges you face in managing your farming activities?
2. How do these challenges affect your day-to-day work and long-term goals?
3. Which areas are most affected – access to markets, finance, labour, and access to inputs?
4. As a small-scale farmer in the district, explain to us the support you are receiving from the government or other organisations.
5. Is this support helpful in addressing your management challenges?

Section 3: To discuss strategies used by small-scale farmers to mitigate the management challenges they encountered at a district level.

1. How do you deal with the challenges you have mentioned?
2. Can you elaborate on the challenges that you face in aspects such as government policies, resource management, market participation, and accessing necessary support, and how these factors influence your farming activities?
3. Are there any informal or local support systems that help you manage the challenges you have mentioned?

Section 4: To provide recommendations to policymakers and relevant stakeholders for the improvement in the management of small-scale farming operations in the district.

1. In your experience, what do you think needs to change to help small-scale farmers like yourself manage better?
2. In your view, explain to us some recommendations you would like to give to the government and other support stakeholders.

Thank You