

Empowerment Status of Black Potato Farmers in Five Provinces of South Africa

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ABSTRACT

- The South African economy and society remain encumbered by the historical disempowering legacies which manifested as a duality in the agriculture industry. In the potato sector these are evident and are amplified by (1) well resourced white agriculture sector and (2) the low visibility in numbers and production scale of black farmers.
- The purpose of this study was to examine the empowerment status of black potato farmers and effectiveness of empowerment initiatives in the potato industry. This presentation however, is limited to examining the empowerment status of black potato farmers across five provinces of Mpumalanga, KwaZulu Natal, Eastern Cape, Free State and Limpopo in South Africa.
- The study applied a cross sectional and mixed methods research design covering 132 randomly selected respondents applying a semi-structured questionnaire and secondary data. Data were analysed for descriptive and inferential research output. Results indicated the empowerment status applying an adaptation of the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) addressing four of five domains (5DE) of empowerment. These are production, resources, income, leadership, and time domains. Time domain was not included. Empowerment adequacy was achieved in a single leadership domain.

INTRODUCTION

- The South African potato industry reflects a low presence and visibility of black farmers with little empirical evidence of black farmers available in the industry.
- The agricultural sector and the economy are undergoing transformational challenges with the NAMC describing the pace of change as too slow with little evident impact created (NAMC, 2012).
- In the agricultural context, Alkire et al. (2013) described empowerment as one's ability to make decisions on matters related to agriculture as well as on one's access to the material and social resources needed to carry out those decisions. This accounts for appropriate skills and capabilities, assets and resources to secure sustainable livelihoods and act on the things important to one's desires (Page and Czuba, (1999).
- In redressing the negative impacts of disempowerment resulting from past policies, the South African agriculture sector continues to implement a national Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) strategy aimed at correcting the past through equality in the economic domain (De Vos (2010).
- This strategy is operationalised by applying the Agri-BEE sector codes to increase access and equitable participation in the sector.
- With BEE limited to addressing a single domain of empowerment, an alternate approach is applied to determining the empowerment status of potato farmers considering empowerment in an agricultural context across four domains of empowerment.
- Therefore, the objective of this study was to determine the empowerment status of black farmers across five provinces South African provinces.

METHODOLOGY

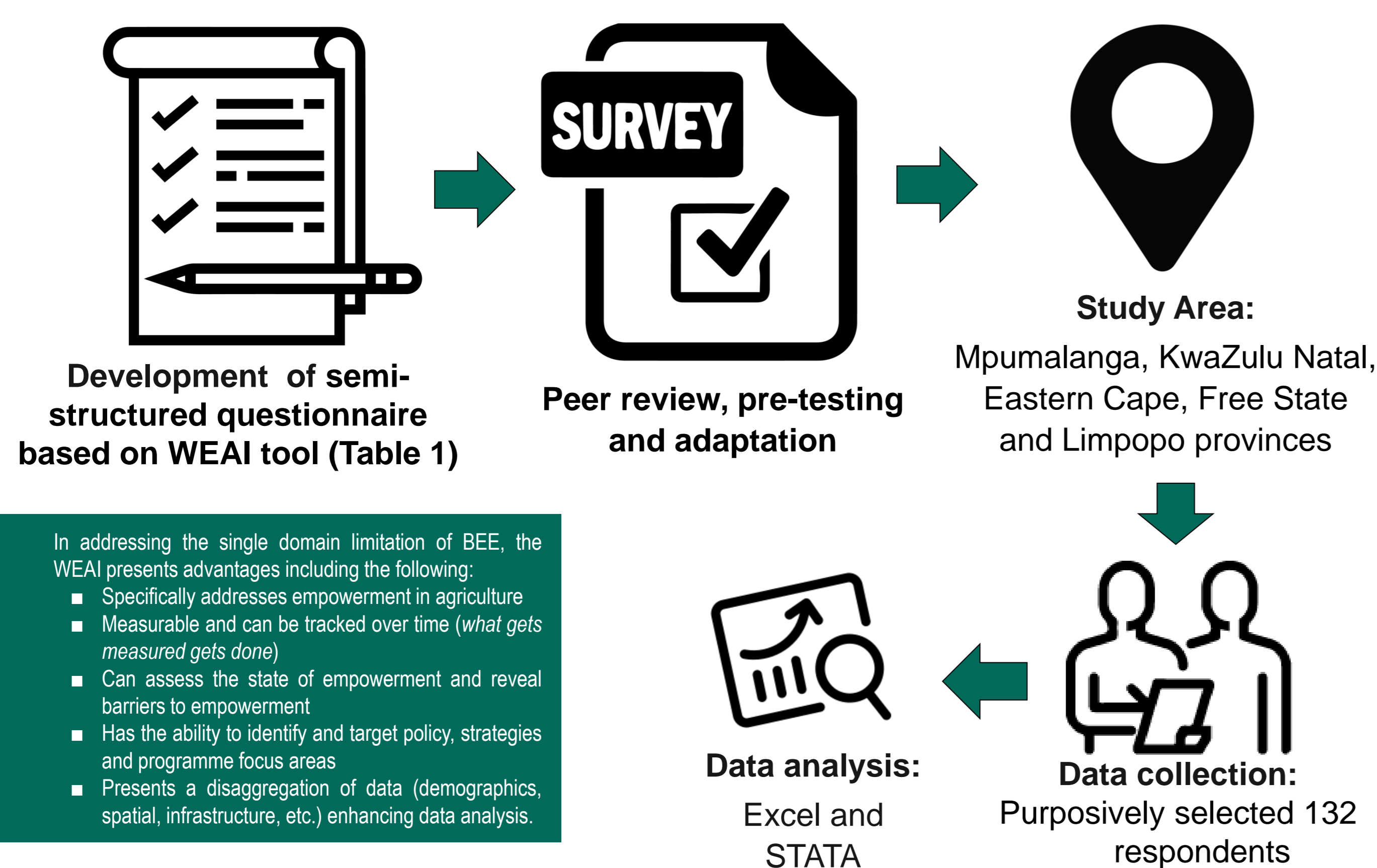


Table 1: Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) Domains

DOMAIN	WEAI INDICATOR	APPLIED INDICATOR	WEIGHT
Production	Input in productive decisions	Who makes decisions on input use	1/10
	Autonomy in production	Potato yield/ha ⁻¹	1/10
Resources	Ownership of assets	Land tenure	1/10
	Purchase, sale of assets	Tractor ownership	1/10
	Access to and decisions on credit	Information through extension	1/10
Income	Control over use of income	Extension frequency	1/10
		Attained income	1/10
Leadership	Group member	Who makes decisions over income use	1/10
	Speaking in public	Leadership effectiveness	1/10
		Capacity to influence change	1/10

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 2: WEAI and 5DE summary results by province

Domain	Selected Indicators	Responses	MP	KZN	EC	FS	LP	Total
Production	Who makes decisions on input use?	Government or other Institution	0%	0%	0%	0%	32%	7%
		Outside household female	14%	13%	20%	0%	4%	12%
		Outside household male	39%	20%	31%	27%	7%	25%
		Household jointly	46%	67%	49%	73%	57%	56%
	Potato Yield per Hectare	0-4t/ha	32%	30%	31%	0%	21%	26%
		4-10t/ha	57%	50%	46%	0%	21%	48%
		10-20t/ha	11%	17%	17%	27%	25%	20%
		Over 20t/ha	0%	3%	6%	73%	32%	5%
	Land tenure	Not certain	17%	18%	10%	29%	0%	18%
		Private land-title deeds	2%	0%	0%	3%	0%	4%
Tribal land –PTO		71%	68%	80%	68%	82%	64%	
Resources	Private land lease	10%	14%	10%	0%	18%	14%	
	Tractor Ownership	No	100%	83%	91%	45%	11%	70%
		Yes	0%	17%	9%	55%	89%	30%
	Information Through Extension	No	54%	50%	71%	18%	21%	48%
Yes		46%	50%	29%	82%	79%	52%	
Frequency	Never	54%	50%	71%	18%	21%	48%	
	Once a season	18%	33%	14%	9%	33%	23%	
	Twice a season	29%	3%	12%	73%	46%	27%	
Income	More than 2 times a season	0%	7%	3%	0%	0%	20%	
	Income	<R42000	69%	87%	38%	9%	50%	56%
		R42000-R100000	17%	3%	18%	36%	7%	14%
		R100001-R150000	10%	7%	21%	27%	4%	12%
		R150001-R200000	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Over R200000	0%	3%	24%	27%	39%	17%		
Leadership	Who makes decisions on revenue use?	Family outside household	0%	0%	0%	0%	11%	2%
		Outside household female	14%	7%	26%	0%	0%	9%
		Outside household male	39%	10%	20%	18%	11%	20%
		Within the household	46%	83%	54%	82%	79%	69%
	Leadership effectiveness	Not effective	46%	13%	54%	54%	9%	32%
Fairly		18%	10%	9%	9%	9%	4%	
Effective		36%	77%	37%	37%	82%	64%	
Very effective		0%	10%	6%	18%	0%	5%	
Yes but with great difficulty		0%	30%	0%	9%	29%	14%	
Capacity to influence change	Yes but with great difficulty	0%	23%	3%	45%	50%	20%	
Capacity to influence change	Yes fairly easily	100%	37%	91%	27%	21%	61%	
Capacity to influence change	Yes very easily							

- The WEAI has been applied as an initial attempt at applying an agriculture specific empowerment methodology to establish the empowerment status of black potato farmers.
- The commonly applied NAMC transformation guidelines present some limitations to measuring individual farmer empowerment.
- For example, a measure of employment equity does not offer insight into the empowerment of individual farmers (Table 2).
- The data presented by the potato commodity organisation PSA reflects information limited to its members, thus excluding many farmers falling outside the organisation.
- Of the empowerment indicators and domains examined in the results farmers across all five provinces have attained adequacy in only a single leadership domain.
- Empowerment initiatives may be addressed through targeted interventions across specific domains with changes tracked over time in more domains of empowerment than a single economic domain.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Empowerment of potato farmers has been attained in a single domain. From the empowerment profile created it is possible to target interventions specifically addressing identified weaknesses. It is recommended that further analyses applying the agriculture specific WEAI methodology be made in conjunction with the often-applied BEE approach in addressing empowerment in the potato industry.

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