

# CASSAVA VALUE CHAIN STUDY: data collection phase, KZN

*The implementation of the cassava value chain project is undertaking a data collection phase, this is according to Dr Moses Lubinga, Cassava Project Manager.*

“We have started with KwaZulu-Natal Province in partnership with the uMhlathuze local municipality and the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). As you are aware, KZN rural farmers have been planting cassava for many years” he said.

The Cassava data collection team included agricultural extension officers from KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) - uMhlathuze local office), colleagues from both the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC) and the Agricultural Research Council (ARC).

The ARC team was represented by Mr. Light Ngobeni, Mr. Blessing Zitha, and Dr. Kenneth Nhudu, who is supervising the ARC’s postgraduate students linked to the cassava project. The postgraduate students are registered with the University of Pretoria and the University of Limpopo. Research by Mr. Ngobeni, one of the students affiliated with the cassava aims to ascertain farmers’ knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions (KAP) about cassava.

Data collected was from cassava farmers based in eSikhawini location and other surrounding areas under uMhlathuze local municipality. The data collection started on August 2 until the 5 August 2022.

According to the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), cassava is a woody plant with erect stems and spirally arranged leaves with petioles of



*NAMC & ARC collecting data on cassava from KZN rural farmers. Photo by Keolebogile Digoamaje*

approximately up to 30 cm in length. From the engagements with farmers, it was quite evident that most were passionate about the crop, *i.e.*, its production, multiple uses, access to markets and expressed need for more sensitisation about the crop in general.

“We would like to venture into the cassava value chain however the biggest challenge is lack of information on how we can access stable market” said one of the farmers in responding to the questionnaire.

Some farmers sold cassava to generate income in order to make a living while others planted the crop for food security reasons at household level. Farmers also expressed that the cassava crop exhibited economical hope in alleviating the high unemployment in the area. According to Stats SA, Umhlathuze Local Municipality unemployment rate was sitting at 31%.



(Left) Cassava Tubers and Cassava Leaf (Right).

Emma Sithole, a local farmer said “if farmers would get enough training on cassava production and processing, they will not only be generating income but they will also be creating employment and reducing food insecurity”.

Some farmers, including Emma indicated that they sell fresh cassava tubers at any price that buyers could afford, an indication that there is no well-known farmgate price for cassava tubers within the community.

With the escalating food prices, cassava was noted as a good nutritious food item that households/consumers may have access to all year round. KZN has the potential to showcase the real economic viability of cassava.

“Upon analysing the collected data, the research team will be in position to ascertain the production capacity of farmers and later on the demand for cassava products, a basis upon which further facilitation for access to markets will be pursued” said Dr Moses Lubinga

At postharvest handling stage, one of the farmers Mrs Mlungwana uses an indigenous technology to process her fresh cassava tubers into a coarse flour. She cooks the processed cassava as porridge and can also make flour.

This method is however time consuming for her and it required advanced innovative ways/machinery for processing fresh cassava tubers. She is one of the few that are pinning their hopes on the cassava project to get assistance.

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