



# An exploration of government administrative processes in supporting agro-smallholders' access to municipal markets in eThekweni Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal Province

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**Dates:**

Received: 04 Feb. 2021  
Accepted: 30 July 2021  
Published: 27 Oct. 2021

**How to cite this article:**

Nyawo, J.C. & Mubangizi, B.C., 2021, 'An exploration of government administrative processes in supporting agro-smallholders' access to municipal markets in eThekweni Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal Province', *Africa's Public Service Delivery and Performance Review* 9(1), a528. <https://doi.org/10.4102/apsdpr.v9i1.528>

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**Background:** The government's inability to ensure that both the local and the national markets adequately accommodate smallholder producers is inhibiting the sector's ability to grow and expand.

**Aim:** This article explored the influence of the governmental administrative processes on agro-smallholders' ability to access municipal markets.

**Setting:** The study is based in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), specifically in the eThekweni Municipality. The target population is agricultural (agro-) smallholder producers who are located within the traditional leadership and government officials (KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and eThekweni Municipality).

**Methods:** A qualitative exploratory research methodology using semi-structured interviews was adopted for this study.

**Results:** The results showed that the government structures and municipal markets do not provide substantial support to agro-smallholder producers who are seeking access to markets. The results further showed that there is no integration or relationship between the government institutions on the issues related to the promotion and development of agro-smallholder producers.

**Conclusion:** Through the application of administrative theory, the article posited the recommendations that the government institutions should incorporate stakeholders' insights, lay a policy foundation for a whole-of-government approach to planning and set the direction for agro-smallholder's planned future. It is also recommended that the government departments create a single planning and coordination structure or forum that will be beneficial to the smallholder sub-sector and avoid duplication and resource wastage directed to this sub-sector.

**Keywords:** government; markets; smallholder; integration; coordination.

## Introduction and background

According to Raju and Singh (2014:1), 'seventy-five percent of the world's poor live in rural areas and depend on agriculture as their primary source of income'. The majority of agricultural households depend on the smallholder farming sector for their survival (Meemkena & Bellemare 2020). Aliber and Hall (2010), Hazell (2011), Singh (2012), Nelsona et al. (2014), Raju and Singh (2014) and Aliber and Mdoda (2015) noted that the smallholder farming sector occupies a significant role in producing food worldwide and contributing to the reduction of rural poverty, food insecurity and unemployment. Hazell (2011) and Sarah, Lower and Terri (2016) found that approximately 500 million smallholder producers participate in agricultural activities across the world.

The smallholder farming sub-sector's role is also emphasised within South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP), which allocated smallholder producers with a mandate to drive rural development and improve their livelihoods (The Presidency 2012). Jordaan, Grové and Backeberg (2014) and Zantsi, Greyling and Vink (2019) asserted that smallholder producers are distinctively placed to perform a key role in stimulating the rural economy towards alleviating poverty in South Africa. Yet whilst smallholder producers occupy a key role within the agricultural sector,

the issue of a lack of land for production remains a challenge (Khapayi & Celliers 2016). Numerous smallholder producers have two or fewer hectares of land (Fan & Rue 2020; Hazell 2011; Sarah et al. 2016; Wiggins, Kirsten & Lambi 2010). Lack of land has negative implications for smallholder farmers regarding market participation, farm income, investments and sustainability. Through planning processes, the local government together with the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform & Rural Development could create measures that would ensure the availability of sufficient productive land for agro-smallholder farmers. The focus of the government is mainly to provide agricultural inputs, tools and extension support services to the farmers, without paying close attention to the issue of insufficient productive land for this sector (Fan & Rue 2020).

The implication of this oversight is dire as it has implications for social instability if smallholder farmers are not supported to enter the mainstream market. Further, and according to Baiphethi and Jacobs (2009), small subsistence farmers can play a significant economic role as they have the potential to reduce vulnerability of the rural and urban poor – cushioning them from high food prices.

Smallholder producers share the following characteristics: low market participation, lack of institutional capacity and support, lack of infrastructure, labour intensive, utilising traditional production techniques, located in the rural areas, middle-aged women dominate the sub-sector, size of the land for farming or limited access to land, lack of access to adequate financing and high levels of vulnerability (Aliber & Mdoda 2015; Fan & Rue 2020; Hazell 2011; Nelsona et al. 2014; Raju & Singh 2014; Sarah et al. 2016; Singh 2012).

Garrity et al. (2010) and Schmidhuber and Bruinsma (2011) have found that locally produced goods from smallholder producers are the key to ensure food security. The growing global population will put increasing pressure on farmers to produce more food in the coming years and pressurise governments to deal with food security and other pressing socio-economic challenges (Garrity et al. 2010). The smallholder sub-sector's growth and development must not be overlooked, as it will be needed to address the critical challenges being experienced by different countries, particularly within rural settings. Van Rooyen, Steward and De Wet (2012) and Jari and Fraser (2012) indicated that smallholder producers cannot be overlooked and will always be relevant in ensuring household food security and income generation.

Numerous researchers explained that development and support of smallholder producers are essential for addressing a number of the issues experienced by rural communities. The smallholder sector's appropriate support could help redress the imbalances that exist within the agricultural sub-sector (Aliber & Hall 2012; De Satgé & Phuhlisani 2020; IFAD 2014). These imbalances relate to a lack of market access, agrarian business support and land ownership regarding

economically viable land for cultivation. Mpandeli and Maponya (2014) noted that the South African agricultural smallholder sector has continued to maintain a livelihood in the face of unfavourable conditions. On the one hand, Van Rooyen et al. (2012), Norton (2014) and Devaux et al. (2016) explained that a successful future for agro-smallholder producers depends on their linkages into the agro-system and commercial value chain. The government and farmers consider unlocking markets for smallholder producers as a vital developmental necessity (Obi, Van Schalkwyk & Van Tilburg 2012). The government's willingness to unlock markets for the smallholders' farming sector is indicated in the NDP Vision 2030, identified as the 'need to utilise procurement programmes to help smallholder producers connect to markets' (The Presidency 2012:205).

Although South African municipalities have jurisdiction over municipal markets, the smallholder sub-sector continues to find it challenging to participate in those markets because of issues relating to transportation, quantity and quality, infrastructure, pricing and storage systems for their produce, amongst others. Municipal markets refer to the spaces or structures created and controlled by a municipality where the selling and the buying of farm produce occur. Chikazunga et al. (2008) stipulated that most of the municipal markets lack a clear vision in terms of taking the smallholder farming sub-sector forward. The well-developed agricultural markets remain inaccessible to the smallholder farming sub-sector, largely because of lack of resources, poor conditions of infrastructure, poor technical knowledge and skills and absence of market information (Baloyi 2010; Jari & Fraser 2009, 2012; Ortmann & King 2010).

The South African government has created numerous support programmes since 1994 to try to reduce some of the challenges faced by the smallholder farming sub-sector (Jordaan et al. 2014; Sikwela 2013; Statistics South Africa 2011; Thamaga-Chitja & Morojele 2014). These included, amongst the others, the Integrated Food Security Strategy, Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme, Micro-agricultural Financial Institutions of South Africa, Linking Producers to Markets Programme, Comprehensive Rural Development Programme, Siyakhula/Massive Food Programme, Extension & Advisory Services Programme and Integrated Food and Nutrition Programme. The main purpose behind the formulation of such programmes was to improve infrastructure, access to land, finance and markets and create an environment in which the smallholder farmers can broadly participate in the agricultural food chain. Aliber and Hall (2010) and De Satgé and Phuhlisani (2020) stipulated that the support activities initiated by different government institutions showed little success in developing and growing the smallholder sector. Lack of coordination is one of the reasons why the support provided is failing, and the initiatives that have been created have focussed only on the 'food security' for some poor households and 'ladders-up' for a few better-off farmers. (Aliber & Hall 2010). There is a lack of support initiatives or programmes that focusses on 'accumulation from below' for a significant percentage of

the existing population of smallholder farmers (Aliber & Hall 2010).

Sikwela (2013:78) noted that several 'farmer support programmes had been instituted in South Africa, but very little is known about their impact on smallholder producers'. Aliber and Hall (2010:3) indicated that the 'smallholder sector in South Africa has been subject to years of official neglect, despite numerous policies and programmes that proclaim the opposite'. Furthermore, Jordaan et al. (2014) commented that despite the various interventions and the enormous efforts and investment by government institutions, the growth and performance of the South African smallholder sub-sector remain disappointing. Erastus, Stephen and Abdullai (2014:29) also indicated that the structures that have been created to stimulate an enabling business environment for the smallholder sector 'have not succeeded in providing the requisite opportunities to enhance smallholders' growth and development'.

Thamaga-Chitja and Morojele (2014) indicated that the government's institutional support fails to take into account the communal life of rural people, which must be understood before business-oriented interventions in the agricultural smallholder sector can be successful. These authors found that the communal life of 'sharing and working' mismatches or clashes with the profit-oriented way of business model. Such mismatches and lack of extensive capacity-building programmes tend to badly affect smallholders' access to markets and the inability of the support programmes to capture the needs of the smallholder farmers.

According to Aliber and Hall (2010:53), the failure of government initiatives is because they have been 'too prescriptive about what smallholder farmers produce; their use of technology; the scale of production; and purpose of production (whether for consumption or sale)'. Such factors have undermined the success of the smallholder farmers as the majority of them are still characterised by poor performance, unsustainability and they are required, through government initiatives, to form large groups to achieve economies of scale (Fan & Rue 2020).

The government initiatives have been mainly focussing on turning the smaller number of smallholder farmers into large-scale commercial farmers (Aliber & Hall 2010). Smallholder farmers should choose what to produce, how they should sell their produce, how they should conduct their operations or whether to be part of a cooperative to achieve large-scale production. The unsatisfactory results of the previous and current government policy initiatives mean that the smallholder sub-sector cannot fulfil the desired outcome of addressing socio-economic issues in the rural areas. In addition, the continuation of similar challenges affecting the smallholder sub-sector shows the government's policies ineffectiveness. Louw and Lulama (2015) indicated that to deal with the limitations that exist within the development of the smallholder sector, a clear explanation of

smallholder farmers and comprehensive analyses of livelihood strategies that result from diversification amongst this heterogeneous group is needed. Thus, commercialisation of smallholder farmers should not be the key strategy for the government in supporting the smallholder sector. This is ineffective on the grounds of efficiency and equity; therefore, different strategies should be incorporated to ensure the development of this sector.

A survey conducted by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) in 2010 shows that the government programmes and policies have focussed on commercially oriented producers with little coordination related to the government's activities for smallholder producers (Stats SA 2011). To ensure the sustainable and successful integration of smallholder producers into the agricultural value chain, the government should accept that this process must involve numerous stakeholders and integrated planning. The preparedness and willingness of all stakeholders to cooperate in developing sustainable and integrated smallholder producers are necessary components in this regard. Government support towards smallholder producers is centred on the lack of planning, coordination and appropriate organising of the infrastructural, financial and human resources processes by the various government departments. Administrative processes, in this article, refers to those functions and principles that are essential to the management of the government institutions to effectively achieve the stated objectives.

Whilst the South African government continues to provide support to the smallholder sub-sector, smallholders' access to the formal markets remains a challenge (Fan & Rue 2020; Khapayi & Celliers 2016; Simelane, Terblanche & Masarirambi 2019). Numerous researchers have indicated that the government processes and activities aimed at addressing similar problems are not integrated, and limited resources tend to be wasted on siloed projects that do not yield expected outcomes. However, there is a lack of studies on the government processes to improve the smallholder sub-sector's access to municipal markets. Also, there is a dearth of studies that explore municipal markets' influences on smallholder growth and development in South Africa. This article explored the influence of the governmental, specifically the provincial and municipal, administrative processes on agro-smallholders' ability to access municipal markets – exploring the importance of coordination, organising and integrated planning between government departments in shaping the smallholder farming sub-sector. The main objective was to explore the administrative processes that the local government has in place to support agro-smallholder producers for market entry. This article is divided into seven sections, which include: introduction and background; research methods and design; review of literature on the smallholder agricultural sub-sector; theoretical framework; results and discussion; summary of the findings and finally conclusion.

## Research methods and design

This study was conducted in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province in the eThekweni Municipality, which is one of the eight

metropolitan municipalities in South Africa. This article employed an exploratory research design, which enabled the researcher to collect extensive data on the individuals and institution(s) being researched. Exploratory studies are necessary when certain facts are known (see, for example, studies by Aliber & Hall 2012; Louw et al. 2008; Salami, Kamara & Brixiova 2010). This article used a qualitative research approach because it allowed the researcher to understand how figures and themes are created through social processes.

The purposive sampling method was selected for this study because the researcher wanted to include participants who were knowledgeable about the subject matter under investigation. The comprehensive primary data were collected using face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with the government officials – KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality. In addition, autoethnography and observation were also utilised to collect the primary data. The qualitative data collected during the semi-structured and focus group interviews were transcribed, coded and analysed using a thematic analysis (TA) technique.

## Literature review

This section commences with an explanation of the structure of the South African government before examining the role of each sphere with regard to agricultural activities, as well as how the country's public service delivery and public administration is set up. This section entails an explanation on the agricultural sector with specific attention to the smallholder sector – its characteristics and challenges.

In South Africa, Chapter 3 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* of 1996 stipulates government institutions that prescribe communication between the three spheres of government at all levels. Within the South African context, intergovernmental relations are the interactions between parts of the state or cooperation amongst government spheres (Kanyane 2014). To achieve governmental goals, including cooperative government, the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* of 1996 provides for an intergovernmental relations system that seeks to improve coordination and alignment amongst the spheres of government. Appropriate instruments such as the Intergovernmental Forum and the Intergovernmental Relations Committee of Ministers (Kanyane 2014) should be available to both public servants and political office-bearers to ensure continuous intergovernmental relations. Section 41 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* of 1996 requires that the consultation process at both the vertical and the horizontal levels must be ensured before decisions are made on matters of common interest. This will enable the spheres or institutions involved to coordinate their legislation and relevant activities effectively and efficiently (Kahn, Madue & Kalema 2011).

Coordination is essential in a situation where there is a concurrency of responsibilities. However, the complex

environment in which the public institutions operate periodically affects the process of intergovernmental relations.

A lack of integrated strategic planning amongst the spheres of government has been one of the shortcomings of service delivery. In turn, this has led to the government's inability to render services in a coordinated manner. According to Kahn et al. (2011:117), the 'strategic planning that cuts across the three spheres of government in South Africa is limited, which leads to fragmented service delivery'. The national and provincial spheres of government share the bulk of social services such as health, education, social security and welfare, housing and agriculture (Republic of South Africa 1996). In these areas, on the one hand, the national sphere of government mainly formulates policies, whilst the provincial sphere implements those policies.

On the other hand, the local government is responsible for the provision of basic services such as refuse removal, water, electricity, municipal markets and municipal infrastructure (Republic of South Africa 1996). The local government performs these functions based on the regulatory frameworks, which the national and provincial governments set. Whilst there are pockets of excellence in government delivery, the challenge remains how to ensure that the best basic services are delivered to the public to aid an outcome-oriented intergovernmental relations framework (Biyela et al. 2018). The quality of public services and the pace of improvements in public services do not match most citizens' expectations, especially in the rural areas. The NDP Vision 2030 indicated that the agricultural sector is a 'concurrent function of the national and provincial government, but it is also dependent on basic infrastructure and planning decisions that are functions of local government' (The Presidency 2012:233).

South Africa's agricultural sector is referred to as a dual economy (Greyling 2015; Zantsi et al. 2019). This is because it consists of both a large commercial sub-sector and a smallholder farming sub-sector, the latter of which operates mainly in the rural areas (National Development Agency 2013; Zantsi et al. 2019). Most of the population within the rural areas live in poverty, and they are, in one way or another, participants in agriculture-related activities. According to Stats SA (2018), poverty levels in the rural areas of South Africa are markedly higher than in the urban areas, with 45.6% of people living in rural areas being poor compared to 13.4% of those residing in the urban areas. Provinces such as Limpopo, North West, KZN and Eastern Cape in particular have areas with significant poverty. The agricultural sector is one of the primary industries in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) with a large smallholder agricultural farming sub-sector that is not part of the mainstream, with most farmers operating in semi-arid and overcrowded areas (Poulton et al. 2010; Sikwela 2013; Zantsi et al. 2019).

The smallholder agricultural sub-sector is a critical source of income generation for many households in rural settings (Fan & Rue 2020; Zantsi et al. 2019). According to the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA 2014), the

smallholder sub-sector represents 80% of all SSA farms, and makes meaningful contributions to production amongst the SSA countries. Countries that promoted the smallholder sub-sector – for various political reasons – used agriculture as an engine of growth and the basis of their industrialisation.

The smallholder farmers produce fresh goods to meet their families' needs whilst at the same time, many of them hope to find opportunities in the local, regional and global markets. Yet, numerous constraints block these farmers from quickly accessing lucrative markets for their produce, for example, most smallholder producers are found in remote areas where there is a severe lack of marketing facilities (Sikwela 2013). Additional limitations include poor or underdeveloped infrastructure, ranging from the non-existence of local market spaces to unreliable sources of market information (Fan & Rue 2020; Ngqangweni et al. 2016; Wiggins & Keats 2013).

The smallholder producers who are involved with agricultural activities in rural settings are often unable to access markets effectively because of their failure to constantly supply the right quantity and quality of products to the lucrative market segments (Fan & Rue 2020; Ngqangweni et al. 2016; Salami et al. 2010). A lack of investment by relevant agriculture stakeholders, mainly the government in the smallholder sub-sector, coupled with a lack of access to capital as well as poor infrastructure, have consistently limited this sector's ability to improve its productivity and the quality of its produce (Van der Haijden 2010; Jari & Fraser 2012). Mamabolo (2017:13) indicated that the 'inadequate support of agriculture through policy serves as a negative tool for providing, amongst others, food for farmers, food security, and job opportunities'. For the farming sector's activities to remain attractive, access to resources, output markets, knowledge, information, skills and infrastructure are crucial to ensure that smallholder producers do business within the agricultural sector (Fan & Rue 2020; Raju & Singh 2014). Nicholls et al. (2013:25) noted that connecting smallholders to functional markets are, therefore, 'crucial to realising sustainable livelihoods for the rural communities'. This must be performed by empowering smallholders to respond to the market demands in terms of volume, quality, consistent supply and traceability.

Several studies have been conducted on the smallholder farming sub-sector. These have included studies on the state of fresh produce markets; direct marketing; factors affecting farmers' choices of marketing channels and produce; institutional and technical factors affecting farmers' market choices; the innovative system approach; alternative marketing options; farmer linkages to markets; land grant resources; commercialisation of emerging farmers; cooperative or collective action to improve access; sources of credit for smallholder producers and the contribution of information communication technology (ICT) (Aliber & Mdoda 2015; Arinloye et al. 2015; Battersby et al. 2015; Chisasa 2014; Devaux et al. 2016; Fischer & Qaim 2014; Khapayi & Celliers 2016; Koech et al. 2015; Louw & Lulama 2015; Mpandeli & Maponya 2014; Njelekela & Sanga 2015;

Ngqangweni et al. 2016; Poole 2017; Qwabe 2014; Raju & Singh 2014; Range 2017; Thamaga-Chitja & Morojele 2014; Wiggins & Keats 2013).

Furthermore, various researchers have investigated the government processes that relate directly to smallholders producers, whilst others have studied service delivery in general, such as participatory local government planning processes to accelerate service delivery; intergovernmental relations in strategic planning; horizontal bureaucrats' influence on politicians and political decisions via their crucial role in preparing, coordinating and formulating policy; coordination and organisational performance; the state of collaboration between municipalities; conflict in local-provincial intergovernmental relations (Adepoju & Salman 2013; Aliber & Hall 2010; Bayu 2020; Biyela et al. 2018; Connell & Hergesheimer 2014; De Villiers 2012; Hegele 2018; Kahn et al. 2011; Kanyana 2014; Lowcharin, Crumpton & Pacharoen 2019; Magagula et al. 2019; Mamabolo 2017; Mubangizi 2010, 2013; Mubangizi, Nhlabathi & Namara 2013; Muchara & Mbatha 2016; Peters 2018; Phakathi 2020; Ubisi, Khumalo & Nealer 2019; Wiewiora et al. 2016). Although several studies have been conducted on the smallholder sub-sector market access, there is a lack of studies that have holistically investigated the impact of government administrative processes on the smallholder sub-sector's access to municipal markets, and also lack of studies that have explored the influence of municipal markets on smallholder growth and development in South Africa.

## Theoretical framework

This study has adopted the classical theory of organisation, namely the administrative theory. This theory deals primarily with the formal organisational structures that determine the efficiency and effectiveness of those public entities that are responsible for supporting the smallholder farming sub-sector. Based on this theory, if an organisation's principles have been fully adopted, it can lead to maximum organisational efficiency and economy. Naidu (2005:60) found that the 'knowledge of elements and principles of administration would provide the manager with the power to organise any operation'. Since 1937, the contribution of Gulick and Urwick to the development of administrative theory has been known for the acronym 'POSDCORB' (Planning, Organising, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting, and Budgeting) to describe seven functions of managers' (Breese 2013:28). The POSDCORB framework, which falls under administrative theory, is considered by the researcher an appropriate framework for this study, as POSDCORB activities are essential for the organisation's efficiency. Writers on administrative theory indicated that organisations cannot achieve their tasks without proper planning, organising, coordinating, budgeting and reporting.

The administrative theory is still found to be relevant today. In support of this, Breese (2013) commented that the administrative theory is still relevant as most of its principles, such as planning, organising, staffing, coordination, division

of work and delegation, are still present and utilised in numerous organisations. The author stipulated that any organisation could not operate without considering some administration principles.

The government's inability to effectively coordinate the support provided to smallholder producers, such as development planning, allocation of resources and the implementation and monitoring of development programmes, is its main weakness in addressing the challenges facing smallholder producers. This article was guided by three administrative principles: planning, organising and coordinating. The administrative theory was relevant for this article because the nature of the study particularly investigated government institutions' processes and actions for the benefit of the agricultural smallholder producers. The administrative theory was also relevant to this article to provide the lenses used to explore how the government influences municipal markets to deal with market access by smallholder producers.

### Ethical considerations

The data were collected before the COVID-19 pandemic, and the researcher ensured that all the necessary ethical measures were strictly followed when conducting this study. Firstly, the researcher secured gatekeeper letters from the relevant organisations that were affected by this research. These letters, which were provided by the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality granted the researcher permission to conduct the investigation. Secondly, in terms of the university's General Rules (GR32), the researcher was required to get ethical clearance before conducting the study, and ethical approval was received from the Humanities & Social Sciences Ethics Committee of University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), reference number: HHS/1611/016D.

## Results and discussion

In this study, interviews were conducted with senior government officials and agricultural smallholder producers were included. It was decided to address eThekweni municipal officials as 'MOs'; and for the provincial department of agriculture officials the acronym 'POs' was used. It was necessary to use these codes to differentiate the views of the government officials at the provincial and municipal levels. The summary of the findings are presented below which will be followed by the presentation of results and discussion. The results and discussion were based on the three developed themes that relate to the article's main objective.

### Summary of the findings

The municipal markets are divided into the retail and bulk or fresh produce markets. These markets accommodate all the producers across the country, especially the bulk markets; however, 99% of the fresh produce comes from the large commercial sector. The agro-smallholder producers' participation in the municipal markets is very low, whilst the

participation of commercial farmers is high. There are no mechanisms in place within the municipal markets to disseminate or distribute information to agro-smallholder producers about the municipal markets' operations. For the municipal markets to be sustainable, they receive a budget from the municipality. It also generates revenue through the nominal fees they charge for rental space, cold rooms and commission.

There is no planning, coordination or relationship between the eThekweni Municipality and the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development on the issues related to the promotion and development of smallholder producers. There is partial municipal internal coordination of activities with other departments that deal with the smallholder sector. There is not much integration of agrarian support programmes between the eThekweni Municipality and the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

The municipality, through the municipal markets, has the human capacity to assist the smallholder producers. The municipality and KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development support agro-smallholder producers by providing certain in-farm infrastructures. In addition, KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has been providing the extension services programme to support the farmer.

### Agro-smallholder producers' involvement or participation in municipal planning processes

To promote governance and to integrate planning strategies at all government levels, stakeholders' involvement in the planning process is critical. Based on the study's findings, the smallholder sector's participation in municipal planning is minimal. The smallholder farmers sometimes attend general meetings that have been organised by the municipality, where every community member is invited to participate during the integrated development planning (IDP) formulation process. However, the input provided by the community members is not always represented in the IDP. The municipal officials also stipulated that the municipal markets by-laws do not mention anything about the involvement of farmers or producers in the formulation of policies. Meaning, the farmers do not participate in any formulation of the bulk or retail market policies.

One of the municipal officials within the bulk market stated that:

'The municipality has created the markets for the farmers to supply their produce but not involving them in creating procedures or policy-making for those markets. The smallholder farmers can only participate in the wide community meetings that the municipality arranges for getting community-wide views about the IDP.' (MO1, Manager, eThekweni Municipality)

In addition, the municipal official within the retail market indicated that:

'The procedures that govern the retail markets are not specific concerning the involvement of the smallholder farmers on issues

that may affect them. However, they provide direction about the operation, management, and control of the retail markets. Although the municipality, at a wider scope, emphasises the inclusiveness of the smallholder farmers during policy-making processes, there is no guidance regarding how the retail market could ensure the participation of smallholder farmers in their processes.' (MO2, Manager, eThekweni Municipality)

There is a correlation between the data collected from the government officials and the farmers. Based on the findings, the farmers indicated that they are not given an opportunity to participate in municipal processes, whilst the municipality also confirms that there are no mechanisms in place to explicitly ensure the participation of farmers in municipal policy or decision-making processes. Based on the above, the study revealed that there is a lack of smallholder involvement in the design, planning and implementation of by-laws on smallholder producers' issues. This is contrary to the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, the *Municipal Systems Act* of 2000 and the *White Paper on Local Government* (1998), which emphasise the participation of community members (in this case, smallholder producers) in policy-making processes so that their needs, desires, capacities and indigenous institutions are recognised, understood and given major weight. The involvement of producers on the issues that only relate to the internal structures of the municipal markets is not necessary; however, the involvement of producers at the earlier stages of planning is critical when the issues or problems to be addressed, either through by-laws or procedures, will directly affect the operations of the producers. For the sustainable smallholder agricultural sub-sector in the rural areas, farmers' participation in government planning processes at all levels is a crucial factor.

It was observed that the municipality is still using a highly centralised top-down approach that considers agro-smallholder producers to be passive accepters of change rather than active participants. A lack of institutional preparedness and a lack of understanding of the concept of planning instruments in the municipalities are two of the factors preventing an integrated approach to planning. Without producers' involvement, there can be no proper relationships, developments and programmes that could have an impact on this sub-sector (Aref et al. 2010). A lack of farmers' involvement in the decision to formulate and implement agricultural policies or strategies will lead to smallholder agricultural development failure. According to Aref (2011), the participation of farmers in agricultural development faces numerous barriers, such as:

[D]ecisions being taken by officials in a highly centralised system; planners believing that local people are uneducated and too ignorant to be involved; and a belief that the local people do not have the requisite knowledge to participate. (p. 157)

At all levels of government, farmers' participation will yield positive results in decision-making or planning processes in many ways, for example, by collecting local knowledge and expertise, establishing acceptance of and/or support for decisions and inducing social learning (Uittenbroek et al. 2019).

The research, through observation, revealed that although the different spheres of government must utilise coherent planning instruments, intergovernmental planning has proven to be a challenge for South Africa. Even though the South African government has created numerous policies and planning strategies over the years, intergovernmental and interdepartmental coordination and integration have remained impractical to achieve. The spheres of government in South Africa make enormous economic and social investments, however, to maximise the impact of these investments, improve the provision of services and avoid resource wastage and duplication of functions, the investment must be coordinated.

According to the administrative theory, the senior management within an institution must develop an outline for tasks that need to be performed and a method for doing them (Nhema 2015). In addition, officers on every level must develop and manage plans for their areas of responsibility. When the structures within the organisation do their part and are then aligned with other structures or levels in relation to planning, then the operation of the institution improves (Griffin 2011). Based on the findings or discussions of this study, the municipality seems to be inadequate in the eyes of the agro-smallholder producers because of its poor planning and lack of inclusion in the planning processes, leading to inadequate attention and prioritisation by government to address their concerns. For instance, the farmers indicated that the municipality has never specifically invited them or organised a meeting to share their concerns to be considered during the municipal planning processes. The findings of the study link to the administrative theory in the sense that planning, as a management function should be a collective activity to enable the maximum accomplishment of the stated objectives and goals with the limited resources. Hence, as planning is the hallmark of government success, politicians and officials must carry out an in-depth analysis of all institutional activities involving agro-smallholder producers and other relevant stakeholders in planned actions. This will ensure good community relationship and obtaining adequate information for proper implementation.

### **Inadequate culture, political and administrative commitment towards coordination by government institutions**

The relevance of coordination or cooperative governance amongst the spheres of government has been highlighted in the Section 41 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* of 1996, and Sections 16 and 24 in the *Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act* of 2005. Although these legislative frameworks are in place, there is still a lack of cooperation between government spheres. The responses of participants from both the provincial and local spheres of government show that there is a lack of collaboration or integration between these two spheres, and even interdepartmental cooperation within the same level remains a challenge. The senior government officials indicated that neither sphere has measures in place to ensure a comprehensive and integrated

support system for the smallholder sector. Every governmental sphere and department formulates and implements its own programmes to help the smallholder sub-sector without involving other stakeholders. Responses from provincial and municipal officials concerning the coordination of their actions towards the smallholder producers are set out below:

'The department is lacking in ensuring the integration of the policies/projects/programmes with other government institutions. It still happens that the department will fund smallholder farmers that fall under eThekweni jurisdiction but with no communication with the municipality. The duplication in supporting such farmers by the department and eThekweni municipality happens almost every time. There is no system that the department is using to ensure that the smallholder farmers are documented, and the database is being kept and distributed to other stakeholders dealing with this sector. Another problem that exists with government institutions is that we do not plan with everyone beforehand.' (POs, Managers, KZN Department of Agriculture & Rural Development)

'Each department will be planning their things and allocating the budget without even thinking of the external parties offering similar services. Thus, there is a need to integrate the policies or programmes across the government departments that could assist the smallholder sector.' (MOs, Managers, eThekweni Municipality)

In South Africa, several government institutions claim to support the growth and development of the smallholder sector. These institutions include municipalities, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Department of Economic Development, the National Marketing Council and the Department of Trade and Investment. All these government institutions have different programmes and policies aiming to support the smallholder sector – such a lack of integration results in duplication of support being offered to the farmers and wastage of resources. The responses below from MOs also show that there is a lack of coordination between these two spheres of government concerning any activities related to smallholder farmers:

'The municipality does not work, plan, organise, or coordinate any activities related to the smallholder farmers with the Department of Agriculture & Rural Development. We have not had much cooperation with this government institution. There is a programme called RASET, which is in the draft phase. It is assumed that the RASET will try to coordinate all the activities or programmes that the eThekweni municipality and KZN Department of Agriculture & Rural Development are implementing regarding the support for smallholder farmers. With such a programme, the relationship between the municipality and the Department of Agriculture & Rural Development is sought to be improved. Besides this proposed programme, there are no mechanisms that are in place to ensure that agricultural activities or programmes between these two institutions are integrated.' (MOs, Managers, eThekweni Municipality)

The responses highlighted above align with the words of the country's President, Cyril Ramaphosa, who in his presentation of the Presidential Budget Vote to the National Assembly on 17 July 2019 identified the 'pattern of operating in silos' in government as a challenge which results in a 'lack of coherence in planning and implementation and has made

monitoring and oversight of government's programmes difficult' (The Presidency 2019:n.p.). Mubangizi (2010) indicated that the failure of government to coordinate similar activities and direct their efforts in a manner that will utilise various resources whilst avoiding wastage and duplication is one of the central challenges in the provision of services to the public. The fundamental collaboration amongst government departments on programmes for the delivery of specific societal impacts seems like a far-fetched dream. Nzimakwe and Ntshakala (2015) noted that the:

[I]ntergovernmental planning and coordination, among the three spheres of government, are crucial for South Africa if it is to realise its objective of becoming a well-oiled developmental state that can respond to and meet the social and economic needs of its people; namely eradicating poverty. (p. 830)

Constant communication, cooperation and collaboration are critical within the spheres of government to ensure that each sphere is conscious of its roles and responsibilities in driving national development priorities, and to ensure that a single policy directs activities that cut across departments, with input from the various departments, to maximise the outcomes.

One sphere of government cannot successfully implement most strategies; the participation of all three government spheres is essential for the adequate provision of services.

Appropriate planning, coordination and the integration of services provided by different institutions at various government levels are essential to ensure conducive environment and investment climate. According to Wiggins and Keats (2013), any support provided to the smallholder producers will yield little impact if the enabling environment that the governments provide is inappropriate for developing market linkages. This means that it will be difficult for smallholder producers to prosper in the markets unless the government ensures the necessary conditions under which markets can function. Political leadership is essential to ensure cooperation amongst government and authority for decision-making in coordination structures. Such political leadership must focus on driving coordination itself, not just the shared goals the departments might wish to attain (Razzano 2016).

The administrative theory indicates that coordination can be achieved in two primary ways, that is, by the institution and by the dominance of an idea. By institution it means to allocate the interconnecting subdivisions of work to people who are placed in a structure so that the work may be coordinated by orders of superiors to subordinates. The dominance of an idea means, the development of intelligent singleness of purpose in the minds and wills of those working together as a group so that each worker will, of his own accord, fit his task within the whole process with skill and enthusiasm. The administrative theory stipulates that there is no institution that could be effective without the extensive utilisation of both these ways to achieve coordination. This study's results are in harmony with the theory as the



government activities that transcend various government institutions are not coordinated, and they do not yield positive results or outcomes as anticipated. The administrative theory indicates that the highest degree of coordination occurs within the departments set up, and the greatest lack of coordination and danger of friction occur between the departments or at the points where they overlap.

Based on the study's findings, it was noted that a lack of communication between the various government departments that are delivering similar services to the agro-smallholder producers is one of the major problems resulting from the lack of coordination.

### Organising financial and human resources for the operation and sustainability of the municipal markets

According to the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (1996), the municipalities are mandated to deliver essential services and be developmental by contributing to the communities' social and economic development under their jurisdiction areas. Municipalities must structure and manage their planning and budgeting processes to give priority to the needs of the community. The research, through observation, revealed that to ensure that this mandate is carried out successfully, both human and financial resources are essential, but the financial resource is more significant as the municipalities cannot attract, select, develop, train and reward suitable candidates, if there are no finances available. The developmental programmes of the municipalities must be aligned with their budgets. The revenue received from the national government and revenue raised internally must assist the municipality with providing services to the communities and ensuring capacity within the municipality. The study found that revenue is received through nominal fees (space and cold room rentals and commission payable) and budget from the municipality (received through nationally raised revenue) for the municipal markets to be sustainable and operational. A participant from the bulk market stated that:

'The bulk market commission is a little bit more expensive. The average commission that is payable (from the profit of the sales) to the bulk market if the supplier decided not to sell directly to the customers but utilising the agent is 12.5%. The 5% goes to the market authority (bulk market), and the agents receive 7.5%. The 5% that is payable to the bulk market assist the market to be sustainable. When the farmers want to use the cold rooms, there are separate tariff charges, and there are tenants that also pay rent for space as well. The bulk market also receives a portion of the budget from the municipality to help with the maintenance, upkeep of the buildings, marketing of the bulk market to the suppliers, securities, car parking, payments of staff and utility accounts, upgrading of the trading system, stationery, photocopying machines, and telephones – precisely the operating expenditure of the market. The bulk of the money (90%) comes from commission fees. The turnover of this market in 2017 was R1.4 billion.' (MO1, Manager, eThekweni Municipality)

The above response from the MO, has revealed that for the smallholder farmers to trade their produce under this market,

they must pay a certain percentage for the market's sustainability. Certain farmers indicated that they regularly transport and sell their produce to the municipal bulk markets, and they do not make much profit as a result of the costs related to transportation and paying the commission to the market agent. The research, through observation, discovered that such costs discourage them from selling to the municipal markets and choose to sell their produce in the farm gates. In addition to the bulk market, smallholder farmers could also sell their produce in the municipal retail market. The municipal official in the retail market indicated that:

'The retail markets sustain themselves with the money received from the budget of the municipality and the revenue generated in these retail markets through the rental of spaces. Those individuals or farmers who want to trade in our retail markets have to pay for space. The rates of space vary across the markets, as they are not the same and not in the same location. The lowest price per day is R7, and the highest price is R500 (it depends on what you are trading as the retail markets consist of diverse individuals selling different things, i.e. fruits and vegetables, clothing, indigenous medicines, prepared food, blankets, poultry). We do not have statistics that show how many agricultural smallholder farmers are utilising our retail markets because we treat everyone as an individual. Usually, fees payable by farmers to hire a small table per day is R7, and to hire a large table per day is R10.' (MO2, Manager, eThekweni Municipality)

The *Municipal Finance Management Act* (MFMA) 56 of 2003 stipulates that the municipality must secure sound and sustainable management of their financial affairs and other institutions in the local spheres. In South Africa, the urban municipalities (metropolitan) are expected to raise a significant part of their revenue from their sources. In contrast, municipalities located in the rural areas receive most of their revenue from grants (National Treasury 2018). For example, the eThekweni municipality has high potential to generate revenue and has numerous financial resources because of its diversified economy, which includes tourism, advanced manufacturing, transportation, finance, a shipping port and a range of government sectors (Mubangizi 2010).

As a result of the heavy reliance of poor rural municipalities on national transfers, the government allocates more substantial portions of the available equitable shares to rural municipalities than urban municipalities (National Treasury 2018). The utilisation of such funds, the MFMA 56 of 2003, requires the municipalities to secure sound and sustainable financial affairs through transparency, accountability, approval and management of their annual budgets. The National Treasury (2018:77) reported that numerous municipalities continue to face institutional and financial problems, breakdowns in service delivery and mounting debts. The non-payment of debts by the municipalities indicates deeper underlying problems such as 'weakness in revenue collection, and underinvestment in maintenance and renewal, which compromise the reliability of basic services' (National Treasury 2018:77).

Given the significant assigned role of the local government in South Africa's constitutional dispensation and its closeness

to the real issues affecting communities daily, this sphere of government remains the South African government's potential flag bearer. It demonstrates its obligation to act in a way that will produce an environment in which everyone can reach their full potential by providing quality services. For this to happen, a:

[C]ore collective of people are needed that possess inherent to them a commitment, but also the skills and competencies attached to the specific role they fulfill to make local government work effectively and efficiently. (Du Plessis 2016:31)

An organisation can have machines, money and even materials, but nothing will be performed without the workforce. Below are the responses from the MOs regarding human resources within the municipal markets:

'The municipal markets are divided into retail and bulk markets. The retail market has numerous markets across the municipality, and they vary in terms of what they are selling. On the other hand, we have one bulk or Fresh Produce Market, which deals with fruit and vegetables only. All these municipal markets have their own managers and operational staff.' (MO1, Manager, eThekweni Municipality)

'The retail market has the capacity to assist farmers and other individuals coming from different sectors to secure spaces within our markets. On the other side, when farmers request training, we communicate with other departments such as Parks and SEDA within the municipality that offers training. Hence, the municipal retail market has required human resources to ensure that it functions optimally.' (MO2, Manager, eThekweni Municipality)

Olaniyan and Ojo (2008:226) indicated that the 'effectiveness and success of an organization, therefore, lies on the people who form and work within the organisation'. Numerous authors such as Morrison and Milliken (2000), Detert and Burris (2007) and Takeuchi et al. (2012) noted that organisations have become more dependent on their workers for positive submissions and insightful ideas. Public institutions need skilled, knowledgeable, experienced and in possession of the necessary expertise in their areas of work to maximise institutional performance and the achievement of goals. The failure of public institutions to pay sufficient attention to the issue of human capacity could lead to significant risk (Du Plessis 2016). From the study's findings, it was noted that the human capital or resource at the municipal level is not a challenge within the municipal markets. The study also found that the municipality organises workshops and training for its employees to learn new things as the environment changes regularly and continuously. The administrative theory indicates that organising is an element of administration concerned with relating all components of the institution into a coordinated whole to achieve set goals. The assigning of specific roles to staff to perform and develop human and material resources to carry out the planned activities is essential to attaining the proposed governmental objectives.

## Conclusion

The South African government formulates and implements laws and policies regarding citizens' responsibilities and

rights, and the provision of essential services to the public. When the government is formulating any such policies or plans, especially for the smallholder producers, it is essential that these constituents are involved or can participate in the process to incorporate their views. They have to promote governance and inclusive planning strategies at all government levels; stakeholders' involvement in the planning process is indispensable. A discussion on the economic impact of the weak public administrative processes supporting agro-smallholders' is beyond the scope of this article. However, the research reported in this article suggests that the smallholder producers' lack of participation negatively affects the sub-sector, as their issues and views concerning the agricultural sector are not integrated into the municipality's plans or policies. The lack of collaboration or integration between the activities and/or programmes related to agriculture between the provincial and local spheres of government does not positively contribute to the smallholder sub-sector's growth. Based on the findings, it is recommended that the government departments create a single planning and coordination structure or forum that could be beneficial to the smallholder farmers. Public institutions must not tolerate excessive levels of incoherence and apparent disorder in government, that is, they must try to seize control of such levers as they can and create greater coordination.

The key challenges of the local and national markets for agro-smallholders remain unchanged. For example, different institutions that assist this sector continue to hold dissimilar views and set of assumptions about this sector's risks and opportunities, and the large commercial sector still dominates the local and national markets. In addition, the underlying transaction costs, the volume of products and the inability of agro-smallholder farmers to find information regarding prices in urban areas or any other markets are also the main challenges that limit them from fully participating in the local and national markets. The ability of the smallholder farmers to ensure sales to the municipal markets and other markets often depends on them having excellent managerial and logistics skills and an ability to deliver a continuous supply of merchandise and meet challenging quality requirements and food safety standards. It is becoming essential for smallholder farmers to acquire the necessary knowledge that will assist them in taking effective action when participating in the markets. Also, the government should create programmes and policies that could help this sector access local and national markets and programmes that support local market development.

The government departments that directly deal with agricultural activities, especially the smallholder producers, have to create a single joint planning and coordination structure to discuss development priorities and planned projects for the smallholder sub-sector. The article also recommends that the government institutions incorporate stakeholders' insights, lay a policy foundation for a whole-of-government approach to planning and set the direction for agro-smallholder's planned future. For future studies, a

broader investigation into the impact of agricultural role players in the smallholder sub-sector's development and growth is required.

## Acknowledgements

This article is based on the thesis (Doctor of Administration) of the first author at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2020, titled: 'Access to municipal markets by the agro-smallholder producers in eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality: A public Administration perspective' by Jabulani C. Nyawo, available here: <https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/handle/10413/19703>.

## Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

## Authors' contributions

J.C.N. and B.C.M. both contributed equally to the article.

## Funding information

The National Research Foundation funded the Ph.D. project for two years for 2016 and 2017.

## Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, J.C.N., upon reasonable request.

## Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are solely of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors, and the publisher.

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