



## Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management Collaborative Research Support Program

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### **Trip Report: Lesotho**

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**Purpose of Trip:** Prepare logistics for the Technology Networks sampling and interviewing of agricultural service sector/community actors associated with the Botha-Bothe household baseline survey established by LTRA-9 economists; and collect qualitative data on the setting and cultural meaning of relationships in these local networks.

**Sites Visited:** National University of Lesotho, Roma; the Lesotho National Farmers Union (LENAFU), and the Agricultural Research Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Maseru; and District Agricultural Offices and partners, Botha -Bothe and villages in the region.

### **Description of Activities**

Dr. Makoala Marake (Soil Scientist and SANREM National Coordinator), Mrs. Thope Matobo (Rural Sociologist in the Faculty of Social Science, NUL) and I discussed the Technology Networks data collection effort, the interview schedule for this visit with agricultural service sector/community actors in Botha- Bothe, and possible individuals with whom I might most profitably interview. After this review, I met with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Lesotho National Farmers Unions (LENAFU) in Maseru. In Botha- Bothe, I coordinated my research efforts with Mrs. Monica Hawkins, District Agricultural Officer (DAO) and conducted directed interviews with 13 individuals before returning to Roma. I discussed my findings with Dr. Marake, Mrs. Matobo, Mrs. Hawkins and LENAFAU CEO, Mr. Motsau Khuele. A working paper summarizing the findings in collaboration with Dr. Marake, Mrs. Matobo, and Mrs. Hawkins is being written. After planning the next phase of data collection, Dr. Marake and I paid a courtesy visit to the Vice Chancellor of the National University of Lesotho (NUL), Prof. Sharon Siverts.

After meetings in at NUL in Roma, with Dr. Marake, Mrs. Matobo and the CEO of LENAFU at the Union headquarters in Maseru, I installed myself in Botha-Bothe to learn about agricultural organization and network relationships. Mrs. Monica Hawkins, DAO and Mr. Selebalo, District Extension Officer identified a set of farmers, extension agents, NGO representatives, and traders from whom I might gather a broad range of perspectives on agricultural practices and developments in the Botha-Bothe District. A total of 13 individuals were interviewed (3 farmers, 4 extension agents (in 2 groups of 2), 3 NGO representatives (1 group of 2), 2 trader representatives (a clerk and a manager), and the manager of a farm center) for 10 interview sessions of at least 45 minutes each and up to two hours in one case.

Findings will be summarized in a working paper to be issued shortly and only general findings will suffice for this brief. Overall, the key priority for farmers is subsistence through planting maize, beans, sorghum and raising some livestock. The objective of production is food security; most farmers only sell if there is a surplus to obtain cash for school fees, clothing, and other household requirements. Some grow crops and raise livestock for the market. However, with the exception of vegetables, wool, and mohair there are few market opportunities.

The primary threats to successful farming in the region come from the climate (drought or too much rain) and lack of markets for production. Poor soils, pests, and lack of a proper mind-set for farming were also identified. The key difference between farmers in the highlands and the lowlands is the cropping calendar and whether livestock predominate. In the lowlands, there is the possibility for two crops a year. In the highlands, livestock is the best option. This distinction leads to distinctive rhythms in market sales and differences in interest group affiliations (dairy, poultry, wool and mohair, etc.). There is also a major difference in ease of interaction: while the lowlanders are more open to novelty and change, the highlanders are seen as being closed to new ideas.

Assuring the market supply of inputs and the demand for outputs is certainly important for farmers and traders. Farmers and some traders feel that supplying information is also a critical element in these exchanges. NGOs and extension services combine training through workshops, demonstrations and other events with the subsidized supply of inputs. Linking farmers to markets is also important for both NGOs and extension. Farmers are looking for good prices, trusting relationships, inputs, new ideas, knowledge and skills, and tractor services. While agricultural sector agents are looking for good prices, trusting relationships, and partners who are passionate about farming and seeking new knowledge.

My discussions with CEO Khuele at the Lesotho National Farmers Unions centered of issues of developing autonomous representation of Basotho farmers at the national level. Part of this was a learning experience for Khuele since he had been a government official in the past, and in that role he was more directive than he knows he should be as a farmer leader. We discussed policy issues concerning input supply. There is a new program that works through local traders, rather than the extension service to get inputs closer to the farmer so that they are more likely to purchase and use them. We discussed the pros and cons of this program, particularly whether there were sufficient incentives for traders to make it work given that key decisions on timing of delivery were still controlled by FAO (the subsidy providing donor).

## **Suggestions and Recommendations**

Dr. Marake and I discussed the next phase of the Technology Networks survey work (with agricultural service sector/community actors) in Lesotho. The following plan was drafted and is circulating among LTRA-9 partners for comments.

1. We had tentatively agreed to develop the networks around two villages (Ha Tabolane n=89; and Ha Sefako n=63).
2. Jeni Lamb will be leading the agriculture service sector/community survey. She will most likely be available about mid-November. Exact dates can be set later. The two-stage data collection effort should take about 3 weeks in total, perhaps a few days more.
3. Dickson has agreed to provide transport.
4. We would like to hire three of the original interviewers for stage 1 of the data collection: obtaining identification and contact information for the contacts identified in the household survey.
  - a. We'll need a list of the households surveyed in the two villages.
  - b. We decided that basing this effort out of St. Charles was the most cost effective and efficient. This would involve Jeni, the 3 interviewers, and Dickson.
  - c. They would spend 3 days in Ha Sefako (7 households per day per interviewer). Household contact time would be about 5-10 minutes each.
  - d. They would spend 4 days in Tabolane, again roughly 7 per day per interviewer for 4 days.
5. One of the women interviewers would stay one with Jeni for another 10-12 days of interviews. After they completed their interviews with identified agricultural service sector/community contacts in the Ha Sefako area, they would move down to Likileng Lodge in Botha Bothe and complete the additional interviews for Ha Tabolane and at the District level from there. Dickson could move back home, but still provide support for interviews taking the women out of town.
6. Jeni would also spend a few days at the National University of Lesotho and give a seminar as suggested by the Vice Chancellor.

## **List of Contacts Made:**

Name	Title/Organization	Contact Info (address, phone, email)
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