



**AN EVALUATION OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN THE
WESTERN CAPE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCIAL
FARMERS IN THE WESTERN CAPE**

by

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to evaluate the relationship between an organisation and a particular stakeholder group, primarily by assessing the communication channels between the two groups and to propose how effective, proven stakeholder relation strategies and models may be applied, if necessary. This is done by evaluating the Western Cape Department of Agriculture and its relationship with commercial farmers, one of its most important stakeholder groups.

The literature review explores proven, successful models of stakeholder communication and engagement. The two-way symmetrical model would be the ideal model for the relationship between the Western Cape Department of Agriculture and commercial farmers as it promotes mutual benefit, understanding and respect. It is therefore through this lens that current engagement between the organisation and stakeholder group in question is viewed.

This study uses an ontology which sees the world not as objective, but subjective and social, consisting of people who each have their own thoughts and feelings and interpret the world around them differently. An interpretivist approach is taken.

Qualitative data collection methods are used to collect the necessary data for this study. (Qualitative, open-ended questionnaires were given to commercial farmers to complete, in order to obtain the relevant information from them, and personal interviews were conducted with departmental officials in order to obtain a dual view.) The findings are illustrated by way of graphics.

The outcome of the study highlights insights gained and outlines problem areas which should be tackled. It concludes with a proposed framework for improved communication and stakeholder engagement between the two parties.

The research will make a contribution to understanding relationships and communication between organisations and stakeholders, which is critical to the success and growth of any organisation. The Western Cape Department of Agriculture can benefit as it will highlight problems areas in the current communication dynamics with commercial farmers and provide guidelines on how to address the issues.

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DEDICATION

For my mother, whose love, encouragement and wisdom meant the world to me. I wish you were still with us to see me complete this qualification. You would have been so proud.

GLOSSARY

The same word or acronyms may have different connotations to people, especially in various disciplines. Herewith an explanation/clarification of basic terms and concepts, used in this document:

- **Commercial farming:** A venture undertaken by an individual or business entity for the purpose of production and sale of agricultural, forestry and fisheries products to make a profit. These are established enterprises producing for market to make a profit with an annual turnover of at least R5 million (Anon, 2018).
- **Corporate communication:** “Corporate communication is communication on behalf of an organisation. It is managed communication with the aim of increasing organisational effectiveness by creating and maintaining relationships with stakeholders. It is founded on an integration of communication and management sciences” (Steyn & Puth, 2000:5).
- **CPUT:** Cape Peninsula University of Technology
- **Issues:** “Conditions or forces that have a significant effect on the functioning of an organisation. Issues are major topics” (Steyn & Puth, 2000:189).
- **Land expropriation without compensation:** According to Ngcukaitobi, (2018:1):

“Expropriation means the compulsory acquisition of land from a private person (individuals and juristic persons) by the state for constitutionally circumscribed purposes. Under section 25 of the Constitution, an expropriation is legally justified if it serves a public purpose or interest. Expropriations are subject to payment of “just and equitable” compensation, which implies a proper balance between the interests of a private landowner and the public interest. The state and the land owner must agree on the amount of compensation, failing which it should be decided or approved by the court. Government usually negotiates the amount of compensation, using the “willing buyer, willing seller” principle. There are two ways of achieving the goals of land expropriation without compensation in a manner that does not impinge on the Constitution. The first is through ad hoc judicial determinations in selected test cases brought before the courts. The second method is to pass national legislation that will

directly, clearly and unambiguously allow expropriations without compensation. There is ample constitutional justification for legislation that would entitle the state to expropriate land without compensation in certain defined circumstances. Section 25(5) is a constitutional injunction for a needs-based land redistribution programme, to enable everyone to obtain land on an “equitable basis”. Until now, however, the state has not passed the legislation mandated by section 25(5). Land expropriation without compensation must be pursued in the greater scheme of land reform. It should not create another round of dispossession, similar to that of 1913. Land expropriation should empower the landless to acquire and productively use the land.”

- **Media:** The vehicles through which stakeholders receive information and entertainment. It could be broadcast (television, radio) or print (newspapers, magazines, flyers, brochures and books). Digital media may include the internet and smart phones (Guth & Marsh, 2007:10, in Monye, 2013). Social media has also become a prevalent and powerful media type.
- **Public Relations:** The International Public Relations Association (IPRA) states that public relations practice is the: “Art and social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling the leaders of organisations and implementing planned programmes of action, which will serve both the organisation and the public interest.” An earlier definition of the Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA) states that “Public Relations is the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between the organisation and its various publics – both internal and external” (Skinner & von Essen, 1996:4). The latest definition adopted by PRISA states that: “Public relations is the management, through communication, of perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders” (Skinner, Mersham & Benecke, 2016:3).
- **Reputation:** “The overall esteem in which an organisation is held: what people say and remember about it, based on long-term perceptions” (Mersham, 2009 in Skinner, Mersham & Benecke, 2016:38). Charles Fombrun, founder of the Reputation Institute, described it as “the perceptual representation of a company’s past actions and future prospects that describes the firm’s overall

appeal to all of its key constituents, when compared with rivals” (Fombrun, 1996:72, in Skinner, Mersham & Benecke, 2016: 38).

- **Stakeholders:** Stakeholders are defined by Freeman as “an individual or a group of individuals who are affected by the decisions of an organisation or whose decisions affect an organisation” (Freedman in Steyn & Puth, 2000:5). “Stakeholders are all groups with an interest (stake) in the organisation. According to the stakeholder concept, a strategy should be in place for each stakeholder group” (Steyn & Puth, 2000:189).
- **Small scale/smallholder/emerging farmers:** Those farmers owning small-based plots of land on which they grow subsistence crops and one or two cash crops relying almost exclusively on family labour. Smallholder farmers are often associated with simple, outdated technologies, low returns, high seasonal labour fluctuations and women playing a vital role in production. Smallholder farmers differ in individual characteristics, farm size, resource distribution between food and cash crops, livestock and off-farm activities, their use of external inputs and hired labour and the proportion of food crops sold and household expenditure patterns (www.nda.agric.za).
- **Stakeholder management:** Identifying stakeholders, determining their needs, deciding on appropriate ways to address their needs and that of the organisation and implementing activities that will address these needs, within an agreed budget. Steyn and Puth (2000:192) notes: “The most effective way to manage stakeholders is to continuously create and maintain relationships with them.”
- **Western Cape Department of Agriculture:** The Western Cape government department responsible for overseeing agriculture in the province. To be referred to as “the department” in the rest of the paper.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction and Background to the Study

The term “stakeholder” has become one of the buzzwords in organisational communication. But what does the word really mean and why are stakeholders so important to organisations? According to Steyn and Puth (2000) stakeholders are groups and/or individuals whose behaviour have consequences for an organisation, and whose behaviour or decisions have consequences for them. Each stakeholder group plays an important role in the success of the organisation. According to Hon and Grunig (1999) effective organisations choose and achieve appropriate goals because they develop relationships with their constituencies. As a result, the process of developing and maintaining relationships with strategic publics is a crucial component of strategic management (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

From the above, it is clear that identifying stakeholders, engaging with them and consequently building relationships with them are of the utmost importance for organisations to be successful. But how exactly are fruitful and endearing relationships with stakeholders achieved? When it comes to engagements with stakeholders, what works and what doesn't?

The Western Cape Department of Agriculture provides a wide range of development, research and support services to the agricultural community in the Western Cape (www.elsenburg.com/services). It deals with various stakeholders in the fulfilment of its mandate. One of its most important stakeholder groups is commercial farmers, a group which is currently plagued by various difficulties.

According to Hofstatter (in Genis, 2012) commercial farmers face a multitude of challenges. One of the most prominent is uncertainty about government policies and roles, specifically pertaining to land distribution and property rights (Hofstatter, in Genis, 2015). The term “land expropriation without compensation” is repeatedly mentioned in the media. This is causing uncertainty among commercial farmers and has led to a decrease in capitalisation in farms. The African National Congress (ANC) plans to change the Constitution to expropriate land without compensation (Marrian & Mvumvu, 2018). According to Bloomberg (2019), lawmakers have also introduced separate draft legislation that outlines the circumstances under which the

state can do this. The ANC says amendments are needed to address racially skewed ownership patterns dating back to colonialism and white-minority rule, a view shared by the Economic Freedom Fighters. Farmers' groups and some opposition parties say the changes will undermine property rights and deter investment, and that they will contest any changes in court (Bloomberg, 2019).

Commercial farmers face not only a growing threat to their property rights, but also adverse propaganda. Farmers are (mostly falsely) accused of abusing farm workers, illegal evictions and more (Uys, 2015). As a result, immense tensions currently exist within the sector. A different perception about agriculture is needed.

Research conducted by Troskie)2017 showed that very few commercial farmers currently take advantage of the many support services provided by the department. The research also hinted at negativity towards the Western Cape Department of Agriculture among certain members of the stakeholder group (Troskie, 2017)., This gave the researcher further reason to believe that much insight was to be gained by looking at the way in which the relationship with commercial farmers in the Western Cape is currently being dealt with.

A recent survey conducted among stakeholder groups by the Communication Services Programme of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture in conjunction with Greenfields Institute of Business, further pointed to a lack of engagement with this group (Tolken, 2017). The survey showed that the Western Cape Department of Agriculture's services are vastly underutilised by commercial farmers. The survey also showed low awareness of communication employed by the Western Cape Department of Agriculture. However, it did not reveal why.

A study undertaken by Louw (2014) also revealed under-usage of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture's services by commercial farmers and hinted at misperceptions among this group about the services on offer and who the department serves. The department's engagement with commercial farmers should reflect that these farmers are regarded as important and that their input is valued and shapes the department's actions. However, is that what is currently transpiring?

1.2 Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study is to evaluate the relationship between an organisation and a particular stakeholder group by assessing the communication between the two and to propose how effective, proven stakeholder relation strategies and models may be applied, if necessary. This is done by evaluating the department and its relationship with commercial farmers. The objective is to identify any problem areas in this relationship—and for corrective action to be proposed. Other similar organisations will be able to use the findings to improve their relationships with similar stakeholder groups.

1.3 Problem Statement

The researcher will evaluate the engagement with the stakeholder group based primarily on the channels of communication used. It is important, for both parties, that their relationship is sound as they are mutually dependent. A negative relationship with the department, one of this stakeholder group's main sources of support and guidance, negatively impacts commercial farmers' businesses and threatens their ability to produce enough to feed the growing population of the Western Cape and South Africa. Commercial farmers are faced with a multitude of challenges in the current economic and political South African landscape and good relations between them and the department is important for the stability and growth of the sector.

A negative relationship with the commercial farmers impacts the department's ability to deliver on one of its key objectives – to support the sector to help grow agricultural production by at least 10% over the next ten years (www.elsenburg.com). It is imperative that the relationship with commercial farmers be managed well in order to ensure that the department is able to fulfil its mission – unlocking the full potential of agriculture to enhance the economic, ecological and social wealth of all the people of the Western Cape (www.elsenburg.com). In doing so, it will assist in growing the economy, providing jobs, ensuring food security, creating vibrant rural communities, boosting exports and ensuring agricultural practices that are in harmony with nature.

1.4 Research Questions and Sub Research Questions

Research question 1	Objective
What is the definition of stakeholder relationship management?	To clearly define what the term “stakeholder relationship” means.
Research sub-question 1.1	Objective
What are the models/strategies/best practice of stakeholder communication?	To explore proven, successful models of stakeholder communication and engagement.
Research question 2	Objective
What is the current state of the relationship between the department and the stakeholder group under investigation as assessed through communication channels and is it dialogic?	To investigate the department’s current communication and relationship management strategy for commercial farmers and to determine how effective it is.
Research question 3	Objective
Can the models for effective stakeholder communication and relationship management be applied to improve communication and the relationship between the two entities?	To make recommendations to improve communication and relationships with commercial farmers and overcome negative perceptions and reputation problems between the department and commercial farmers, if necessary.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The research will make a contribution to understanding relationships and communication between organisations and stakeholders, which is critical to the success and growth of any organisation. The department can benefit as it will highlight problems areas in the current communication dynamics with commercial farmers and provide guidelines on how to address the issues. In general, this research illustrates the importance of communication management and should contribute to the body of knowledge in the area of effective communication with stakeholders.

Improved stakeholder communication with commercial farmers will undoubtedly benefit/add value to the agricultural sector. It will result in growth of the sector, which will lead to more food being produced, more jobs being created, more agricultural products being exported to international markets (earning foreign currency is important) and upliftment of rural economies.

1.6 Summary

This chapter set the scene for the study and provided background to the research problem. The problem and research objectives were stated and the research questions and sub-research questions were outlined. In conclusion, it remarked on the importance of the research and how it will add to the knowledge and improved practice of stakeholder communication and relationships.

The next chapter will present the findings of the literature review. It will explore stakeholder, communication and relationship management theory as well as communication management in government. It will also look at relationships between government and farmers on a national and international level.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the theoretical background of the study. The literature sheds light on commercial farming in South Africa (and specifically the Western Cape). It will also look at the role of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture, with regards to commercial farmers. In addition, it will review current literature on stakeholder engagement, relationship and communication management and the *status quo* of this at other government departments and entities within the agricultural sector, in South Africa and abroad.

2.1.1 Stakeholder Engagement, Communication and Relationship Management Theory in Broad

According to Steyn and Puth (2000:98) “good two-way communication and dialogue with stakeholders are important to identify any problems that threaten the relationship at an early stage. The process starts with communication, which has the natural consequence of relationships. Stakeholder participation is of the essence and they must be included in the organisation’s decision making and strategy formulation processes”. Hon and Grunig (1999) state that publics’ goals, interests and concerns should be incorporated into strategic decision processes and that organisations should listen to and collaborate with stakeholders.

MacNicol, Giffin and Mansell (2014:6) view the term engagement as “signifying all the things an organisation might do with stakeholders: consult, listen, understand, communicate, influence and negotiate with the broader objectives of satisfying their needs, gaining approval and support or at least minimising their opposition or obstruction”.

According to Steyn and Puth (2000) a strategy should be in place for each stakeholder group. Ideally a group of managers (usually those in the PR/Communication field) should manage particular external groups. The most effective way to manage stakeholder groups is to continuously create and maintain relationships with them. Hon and Grunig (1999) agree that communication programmes should be in place to develop and maintain effective long-term relationships between management and publics.

Steyn and Puth (2000) state that the first step in stakeholder management is to identify and understand each stakeholder group – their values, key issues, expectations etc. as well as the nature and size of their stake. Rawlins (2006) explains that in public relations literature, there are various ways according to which stakeholders can be segmented – some are as simple as internal versus external. He views the best effort to identify stakeholders as the ‘linkage model’ developed by Grunig and Hunt (1984:141). “This model has four linkages that identify stakeholder relationships to an organisation: enabling linkages, functional linkages, diffused linkages and normative linkages. Enabling stakeholders have some control and authority over an organisation, such as the board of directors and governmental legislators/ regulators. They provide an organisation with resources and the necessary levels of autonomy to operate. Functional stakeholders offer input to the organisation (e.g. labour and resources) and use its output (such as consumers). Normative stakeholders share similar values, goals, or problems e.g. professional associations. Diffused stakeholders have occasional interaction with the organisation e.g. the media”. The stakeholder group under investigation in this study falls under functional stakeholders as they use the output (resources and services of the department).

Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997:14) developed a more comprehensive model that included the attributes of ‘power’, ‘legitimacy’ and ‘urgency’. Power refers to the ability stakeholders have to influence the outcome of an organisation - essentially the ability of stakeholders to impose their will. Legitimacy refers to the authority and level of involvement stakeholders have in an organisation, if their involvement is appropriate and to what level. Urgency refers to the time expected by stakeholders for responses to their expectations and thus the need for immediate action.

As noted by Steyn and Puth (2000) above, the first step in stakeholder management is to identify and understand each stakeholder group. The second step in the process is to identify strategic issues that affect stakeholders and thirdly a strategy should be drawn up to deal with each group. These should be monitored throughout.

Authors on the subject agree that there should be continuous relationship building and collaboration with stakeholders and that communication programmes should be posited for each stakeholder, but few offer detailed suggestions on exactly how this should be done and what it should contain. Steyn and Puth (2000) suggest the creation

of forums where expectations can be shared. Ledingham (2003) is of the opinion that the building and sustaining of organisation-public relationships requires not only communication, but is dependent on the behaviour of the organisation towards its stakeholders.

Wheeler and Sillanpää (1998) emphasise the importance of obtaining the maximum amount of available information from stakeholders to maintain key relationships. According to them, this means regular conversations, focus groups and opinion surveys. It also means an organisation should organise itself to be receptive to inputs of opinion.

Hon and Grunig (1999) suggest that relationships should be maintained in the following ways: Access to members of publics, transparency among the parties involved about their emotions and opinions, a commitment by parties to take each other's apprehensions seriously and joint problem solving.

Managing stakeholder relationships requires much effort. According to McKee and Lamb (2009:2) "the process of coming to know and continuing to understand the concerns, needs, priorities, media habits, communication patterns and social commitments of key stakeholder group requires effort, resources and knowledge." McKee and Lamb (2009:2) further states that "it can be frustrating at times and is an ongoing process. Thus the managing of stakeholder relationships require continuous efforts at research, planning, executing and evaluating in order for organisations to remain open for new input and output."

The effort bears fruit in many ways. For instance, organisations may find themselves in crisis situations from time to time. McKee and Lamb (2000) maintain that PR practitioners play an important role in helping organisations devise solutions in the event of a crisis. Organisations that continue to communicate in a clear, accurate and empathetic manner with their stakeholders usually find that their relationships with the stakeholders in question prevail, even after the crisis.

Not only is stakeholder relationship management difficult, but it is also complicated: MacNicol, Giffin and Mansell (2014) state that stakeholder engagement is complex and that there is no specific answer to the question of how it should be done, nor a

specific method to be employed. Matos and Silvestre (2013:64) suggest that one of the reasons for this is that stakeholders have different interests and goals.

The role of the PR/Stakeholder manager is key in managing relationships. According to Matos and Silvestre (2013:64) “the role of the manager is to guide the relationship so that everyone accomplishes their purpose”.

It is important to make mention of one of the most important studies in public relations/communication, which led to the formulation of the Excellence Theory. According to Grunig et al. (2006) the theory demonstrates that public relations is a unique management function that helps an organisation interact with its various stakeholders. Publics affect the ability of organisations to accomplish its goals. Organisations have relationships with individuals and groups that help set the organisation’s goals and has an impact on the success of its strategic decisions and behaviours. The study showed that the value of public relations comes from the relationship that organisations develop and maintain with publics.

The quality of the relationships results more from the behaviour than from the messages the company communicators disseminate. Communicators can develop relationships more effectively when they communicate with publics symmetrically rather than asymmetrically. Excellent public relations departments develop programmes to communicate actively and symmetrically with stakeholders.

Jeffery (2009) postulates that a distinction should be made between stakeholder engagement and stakeholder management as the two are crucially different. Stakeholder engagement implies a willingness to listen and discuss ideas of interest to stakeholders. He emphasises that organisations have to be prepared to consider changing what it wants to achieve and how it operates upon completion of stakeholder engagement. When organisations do engage successfully it is a win-win for business and society. Jeffrey (2009) proposes the following model for engaging with stakeholders:

- **Stage 1:** Plan: Identify objectives, decide on issues to address and prioritise stakeholders.
- **Stage 2:** Understanding stakeholders: Investigate their motivations, objectives, interests, concerns etc.

- **Stage 3:** Prepare internally to engage: Dedicate time and resources.
- **Stage 4:** Build trust: Recognise the different level of trust of stakeholders.
- **Stage 5:** Consult with stakeholders: This includes personal interviews, workshops, focus groups, public meetings, surveys and more. Different mechanisms should be used for different stakeholders.
- **Stage 6:** Respond and implement: Decide on a course of action for each issue.
- **Stage 7:** Monitor, evaluate and document: Collect a wide range of views.

(Jeffrey, 2009)

2.1.2. Communication should be a “two way street” (dialogic)

According to Kent and Taylor (in Pang et al., 2018) public relations focusses increasingly on relationship building. Therefore it has become of the utmost importance that an organisation’s communication with its stakeholders are dialogic. Kent (1998:321) notes: “Dialogic communication refers to any negotiated exchange of ideas and opinions”.

The term “dialogic communication” is key in relationship building. Kent and Taylor (in Augustine et al, 2018) argue that it encompasses an organisation’s efforts to engage in an open, honest and ethical relationship with its publics, which gives an organisation the opportunities to hear from the public and adapt to its needs. Taylor, Kent and White (in Augustine et al., 2018) reiterates that an organisation’s use of dialogic communication to build relationships with the public shares the same quality of an individual’s dialogues in interpersonal relationships. Both processes involve interactions that is aimed at trust and to develop satisfactory relationships. Pang et al (2018:78) recommend that “to maximise positive outcomes and minimise negative consequences for organisations and for stakeholders, organisations should carefully assess the outcomes of each set of dialogic communication strategies and actively solicit key stakeholders’ feedback on their communication effort”.

2.1.3 The Value of Managing Stakeholder Perceptions and Ensuring a Positive Reputation Among Stakeholders

A positive reputation among stakeholders is of great importance. If stakeholders have a negative perception of an organisation, it can have an adverse effect on their willingness to engage with the organisation in question and they will not be open to

attempts by the organisation to communicate with them. Therefore, as stated by Bechan (2008) positive reputation is a valuable corporate asset and needs to be managed proactively.

According to Murphy (in Bechan, 2008) organisations must engage in two-way communication between stakeholders and themselves in order to develop positive relationships and reputations. Stakeholders hold interactive relationships and transparency in high regard, not top-down communication. He believes that organisations must do everything in their power to align specific activities with specific stakeholders.

Bechan (2008) further states that much of the focus of reputation management has moved to the management of the effective handling of messages to key stakeholders. Organisations that have built a strong reputation have greater loyalty from stakeholders. Stakeholder management and corporate reputation are closely aligned (Bechan, 2008).

2.1.4 Integrated Stakeholder Communication

It is important to take a look at the term “integrated stakeholder communication”. Conoway and Laasch (2012) state that this requires all the following elements to be integrated for successful communication and stakeholder relationship management:

- Communication channels: All external and internal communication channels must convey the same message, which is aligned with the communication goals (linked to the company’s overall strategy).
- Stakeholder groups: All stakeholders must receive a consistent overall message, although the message must be customised to fit the different stakeholder’s characteristics.
- Coordination within the organisation: Communication within the organisation (between individuals and units/departments) should be co-ordinated.
- Walk and talk: Messages sent must be a true reflection of the organisation’s social, environmental and economic performance, in order to establish credibility.
- Goal structure: Outcomes of stakeholder communication must be balanced between company and stakeholder benefit.

(Conoway & Laasch, 2012)

2.1.5 The Future of Stakeholder Communication and Engagement

The world is constantly evolving and so too communication. Monye (2013:118) rightly states that “communication in the 21st century has taken a different dimension. The dynamics of communication have evolved into a space of spontaneous accessibility.” The author also states that, with the advent of the internet, the communication landscape has changed. This has led to communication-on-the-go. Interactions of organisations and stakeholders have become unlimited, breaking down geographical and situational barriers. To stimulate stakeholder loyalty, organisations could constantly communicate changes, trends and events to their stakeholders by using new technology such as smart phones and social media, which offer an immediate exchange of information and messages (Monye, 2013).

Augustine (2018) concurs with Monye (2013). Over the last two decades, development in online media and their uses have allowed stakeholders a greater voice in the decision-making processes of organisations. Online media provides an environment where negotiation between organisations and stakeholders may occur. Dialogue in online media allow audiences to provide feedback on organisational practices and give organisations opportunities to respond to the public’s concerns.

The interactivity of online media can facilitate the quality of organisation-stakeholder conversations and result in increased trust and product knowledge. Men et al. (2018: 93) echo this sentiment by stating that “the conversational, communal, personable and relationship-oriented communication and transparent features of social media provides an opportunity for genuine dialogue to happen and to strengthen relationships with publics”.

According to Boitnot (2020) public relations practitioners can use social media to proactively engage in reputation management activities and identify potential problems in stakeholder relationships. Public relations professionals should use social media optimally in an increasingly connected world. Social media can help public relations professionals meet their goals or it can become a hurdle in the reputation management process, depending on the situation (Boitnot, 2020).

2.1.6 An Overview of Agriculture and Commercial Farming in South Africa

South African agriculture provides food and fibre to satisfy the basic human needs. The country is self-sufficient in most major agricultural products and provides a surplus of some e.g. maize, fruit, wine and sugar to export to other countries, such as the United Kingdom, China, European countries such as the Netherlands and African countries such as Namibia. It contributes significantly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of South Africa (Tembo, 2008).

According to Mosely (in Tembo, 2008) South African agriculture is characterised by extreme dualism and inequality. A well-developed commercial sector co-exists with a large smallholder and subsistence sector. South Africa's agricultural sector is not dominated by subsistence farming like in other African countries. Large commercial farms dominate the sector, especially in the Western Cape. Most Africans are involved in subsistence or smallholder farming. This has led to high poverty levels. In response the national Department of Agriculture devised the Agricultural Black Economic Empowerment (Agri-BEE) framework to support and empower black South Africans. The focus of the national and provincial departments of Agriculture, is mostly on supporting smallholder farmers and assisting them to transition to commercial farmers (Troskie, 2020).

The Western Cape agricultural sector is substantially different from other provinces due to its climate, composition of output and export orientation. Western Cape agriculture focusses mostly on fruit, wine, winter grains, vegetables and livestock. Commercial agriculture is the leading export sector in the province (Tembo, 2008).

Before 1994, white commercial farmers in South Africa (including the Western Cape) held a privileged position. They received financial support and subsidies to purchase land, for debt consolidations, to purchase implements and livestock, improve infrastructure etc. After the first democratic election in 1994 and the deregulation of agricultural marketing in 1996, white, commercial farmers lost their privileged position when political and policy changes removed the certainty afforded by controlled marketing, protective tariffs and weak legislation regulating resource use and labour relations on farms and transformed agriculture into a sector that is open and highly sensitive to events on world markets (Genis, 2012).

Today, commercial farmers face a multitude of challenges. Hofstatter (in Genis, 2012) states that in contrast to the situation pre-1994, commercial farmers now receive little financial assistance from government as available funds are mostly channelled to emerging farmers. According to Genis (2015) deregulation of markets meant that South Africa's markets were opened up to international competition. The whole support environment changed when South Africa again became part of the global scene – post 1994 and following the introduction of the Agricultural Product Marketing Act of 1995 (Act 47 of 1995). This Act disbanded all Marketing Boards. At the same time South Africa also signed the Marrakech Agreement of the World Trade Organisation. The combined effect was that subsidies disappeared.

While facing increased competition, farmers are at the same time battling increased costs such as rising fuel and energy prices. Other issues that add to their woes are restrictive labour policies, under-investment in the rural economy and low investor confidence in agriculture. In addition, climate change has led to erratic weather patterns, including droughts and floods. Farmers are also under increasing pressure to conserve natural resources and practise conservation agriculture (Genis, 2015).

Purchase (in Sishuba, 2020) adds poor service delivery by government (Eskom and load shedding being the prime example), pest and disease outbreaks such as foot-and-mouth disease, Avian and Swine Flu, and deteriorating and poor economic growth to the list of challenges farmers face. He also mentions barriers to exports market such as read meat to the Chinese market. Lastly, Philips (2019) considers two of the biggest challenges for agriculture in South Africa to be a lack of government expenditure on agricultural research and development and GDP/capita in terms of US dollar purchasing power parity.

The Western Cape's 4300 remaining commercial farmers (down from 17 000 in 1994) are vital to the food security of not only the people in the Western Cape, but also to an extent to those of other regions (Uys, 2015). According to Uys (2015) they contribute 10.5% of the province's gross domestic product (GDP) and 5% to the country and employ more than 2 million people, mostly unskilled. Commercial farmers underpin the rural economy and the prosperity of small rural towns. This applies not only to the Western Cape, but to the whole of South Africa.

In summary, agriculture is a tough space in which to operate in the Western Cape and South Africa at the moment. The sharp decline in commercial farmer figures therefore comes as no surprise. To prevent a further decline in these figures and protect food security in the province, good relations between this stakeholder group and the WCDoA, one of its main sources of support, is of the utmost importance. However, Troskie (2017) notes that, although the number of commercial farmers have declined, it does not mean that the area under commercial production also declined. Economies of scale dictate that commercial farms get bigger, leading to increased efficiency. Hence, this trend is not necessarily negative.

However, there is light in what seems to be a dark tunnel. Despite the many challenges, the broader industry remains remarkably robust and resilient (Purchase, in Sishuba, 2020). Erasmus (2019) remarks that, ironically, the ANC's tough approach to the commercial farming sector has stimulated higher productivity. According to this author, for most of the 20th century, South Africa's agricultural productivity lagged behind the world average, and it was only after deregulation in the mid-1990s, following the dawn of democracy, that things started changing. South African farmers were forced to come to grips with the demands of the free market system, and, faced with dwindling profits, they adapted quickly. They decreased the quantity of inputs used, and focused on improving the quantity and quality of outputs.

Philips (2019) claims that around 2006, the productivity of the local farming sector was on par with the rest of the world, as the success of some of the country's export industries such as citrus, table grapes, wine, apples and pears has shown. South Africa's farmers are now among the most competitive in the world. They increased productivity by investing in mechanisation while at the same time cutting down on labour. Philips (2019) states that despite facing various challenges, South Africa's food security ranked first out of 28 Sub-Saharan African countries and 48 out of 113 countries surveyed worldwide.

Hlomendlini (2012) notes that agriculture (and food security) in South Africa will only truly thrive when government, business, policy makers, civil society and farmers (commercial and smallholders, white and black) stand together and put aside politics for the betterment and transformation of the sector. Purchase (in Sishuba, 2020) suggests that a new set of building blocks, in partnership with government and labour,

needs to be posited to take the agricultural sector as well as the country forward. This initiative has been put into motion through the Public-Private Growth Initiative (PPGI) and the master plan initiative announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa, which gathered momentum early in 2020 (Purchase, in Sishuba, 2020).

2.1.7. Role of the WCDoA

The Western Cape Department of Agriculture's vision is to ensure an agricultural sector that is united, prosperous and in balance with nature (www.elsenburg.com/services). It does so through a variety of services.

The department's administrative headquarters are situated on the historic farm of Elsenburg in the Boland region, while agricultural research is conducted at the department's seven research farms, situated throughout the province. Further Education and Training Centres, extension offices, state veterinary offices and animal health technicians are also located throughout the province (www.elsenburg.com/services).

About 45% of South Africa's agricultural exports move through the province and the value added in the sector amounted to more than R20,8 billion per annum in 2016 (StatsSA, 2018). The agricultural sector not only stimulates economic growth in the province, it also plays a major role in creating sustainable job opportunities (www.elsenburg.com/services).

The Western Cape Department of Agriculture has a direct or indirect influence on the production of wine, deciduous fruit, citrus, grain, fynbos, vegetables, ostriches, small and large stock, as well as dairy products.

Services are delivered through seven programmes:

- Farmer Support and Development
- Rural Development Co-ordination
- Sustainable Resource Management
- Technology Research and Development
- Agricultural Economics
- Veterinary Services
- Structured Agricultural Education and Training

(www.elsenburg.com/services)

2.1.8 Communication and Stakeholder Engagement in Government

The need to manage key stakeholders is not restricted to the private sector, in fact the need to manage stakeholders is even more relevant when referring to the public sector. According to Rensburg and De Beer (in Haarhoff, 2019) the King III Report on Corporate Governance for South Africa emphasises that stakeholder management is crucial within the corporate governance context. In this report, the broad approach to stakeholder relationship management is explained in detail and guidelines on how stakeholder relationships in government can be managed are provided. These have consequences for corporate communication strategies in all institutions.

Total stakeholder involvement and engagement is of high importance. The breach between stakeholder perceptions and the performance of government departments should be managed and measured to enhance government departments' reputation. Stakeholder engagement is also an important consideration in public value theory, recognising the shift to civil society (Rensburg & De Beer, in Haarhoff, 2019). Stoker (in Haarhoff, 2019) stresses the difference between the public domain and the commercial sector. Accountability is achieved through negotiated goal setting. It is multi-faceted and not a linear relationship.

Brywon, Ackerman and Eden (in Haarhoff, 2019) argue that collaboration is the new approach and public managers must join forces with various stakeholders such as business and citizens in order to accomplish common goals. Constitutional democracy in South Africa tasks government with the role of building democracy and ensuring the equitable production and delivery of public service to citizens. This includes ensuring that they are involved in the decisions affecting their lives.

Communication and stakeholder relationship management in government differs from that in the private sector and faces a unique set of challenges. According to Ramodibe (2014) the first and biggest challenge is limited resources. Communication is often low on the list of funding priorities as it is seen as not being strategic and critical towards fulfilling the mandate of the institution. Given the declining status of government budgets, this is bound to get worse, not better.

The second challenge is that there is often a lack of co-ordination of messages in government departments, because campaigns are done impromptu. This is aggravated by the fact that each sphere of government has its own mandate and prioritises differently (Ramodibe, 2014).

According to Ramodibe (2014) another huge challenge in government, which affect communication and engagement with stakeholder is “red tape” (procedure, rules and regulations that are in force, but do not advance the legitimate purposes the rules were intended to serve.) This reality, faced by government communicators on a daily basis, often impedes swift and effective communication. It also causes stakeholders to view government as inflexible and unresponsive to their needs.

The fourth challenge is multilingualism. English is the language most often used by government communicators. This is despite the fact that it is not the home language of the majority of South Africans (Ramodibe, 2014).

The fifth challenge to be discussed relates to cultural diversity. Cultural barriers include language, behaviour, stereotypes and more. This could lead to communication difficulties and misperceptions between government communicators and their target audiences (Ramodibe, 2014).

The last challenge is a lack of face-to-face communication by government. According to Axford and Higgins (in Ramodibe, 2014) this type of communication is very important as it is direct and personal and provides immediate feedback and interaction between government and the people. Government stakeholders view this type of communication as reliable, believable and a demonstration that people care. However, it is not possible for government to interact with people on a daily basis due to budget constraints and other commitments of running the government.

Ring and Perry (in Haarhoff, 2019) adds to the list of challenges by stating that - due to the number of stakeholders involved in the service delivery process - it is more complicated than the private sector where the focus is more on the bottom line. Proctor (in Haarhoff, 2019) concurs that there is pressure to operate in an environment where government budgets are continually being tightened while still having to meet the growing demand. Within this strained financial climate, government departments must

still achieve national goals while constantly balancing the complexity of conflicting interests from multiple stakeholder groups.

Pillay (2010) argues that there is a lack of and ineffective stakeholder engagement in certain government departments, which leads to uncertainty. These departments create limited opportunities for meaningful participation by the public and fail to take input and comments from the public seriously. When stakeholder dialogue and communication does take place, it often affords limited options to change the outcomes as it happens toward the end of the policy or regulatory framework formulation processes. Hostility between certain government agencies is also problematic for stakeholder relationships. According to Holm et al (in Pillay 2010) government departments and support agencies lack the necessary co-ordination and efficient communication to achieve stakeholder participation and buy-in.

Again, the problem is not unique to South Africa. Young (2008) states that the poor quality of government communication is the main reason behind a declining interest in public participation, marginal legitimacy and a poor reputation in Australia and many other governments.

Mukhudwana (2014:9) offers the following solution: “For government communication to be professional and strategic, it must be organised excellently and effectively while taking into account the advocacy nature inherent in external organisational rhetoric that could threaten the ethics and legitimacy of government communication management.” The author goes on to say that the negative impacts of the public sector communication environment can be considerably reduced if communication professionals in government are strategic and ethical in their approach to their work. Lui and Horsley (in Mukhudwana, 2014) are of the opinion that unique and distinctive communication models are crucial for communication management in government due to the fact that government’s level of responsibility far exceeds that of the private sector.

2.1.9 Practical Recommendations for Improved Stakeholder Communication and Engagement in Government

Monye (2013) offers the following practical suggestions to improve stakeholder relations:

- In order to build loyalty, the interests and concerns of stakeholders should be at the centre of an organisation's activities, policies and managerial decisions.
- A stakeholder feedback unit should be established to look into the concerns of stakeholders. In organisations where such a unit already exists, strategies should be devised to strengthen awareness of stakeholder issues.
- Newsletters serve as a bridge between organisations and stakeholders and should be published on a regular basis to keep stakeholders informed on company matters. This contributes to a sense of belonging and stimulates mutual respect.
- Media (broadcast and print) plays a vital role in the information dynamics of any organisation. Therefore media relations of organisations should be cordial, mutual and reputable. Never say: "No comment"!

2.1.10 Stakeholder Communication and Engagement in the Agricultural Sector

A review of literature on stakeholder engagement in the agricultural sector yielded the following results. The (national) Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) describes their stakeholder engagement activities as: Identifying key stakeholders, defining their participating roles and tasks, assisting them to understand their related responsibility and sustainability in the public participation process, facilitating stakeholder interactions and providing constant feedback on implementation, obtaining stakeholder feedback and monitoring stakeholder satisfaction.

The (national) Department of Water and Sanitation lists their stakeholder engagement methods (aimed at empowering stakeholders) as print and electronic media, individual and group meetings, workshops, interviews with specific, relevant stakeholders to discuss matters related to them, forums and more.

Crookes Brothers Limited, a well-known farming group in the Western Cape, states that relationship management is an essential element of strategy implementation supporting long-term sustainability objectives. They regularly consider and address legitimate interests of stakeholders with the conviction that stakeholder perceptions affect the group's reputation and stakeholder support influences group performance. The organisation has a stakeholder engagement plan, listing each stakeholder, the objectives of communication with that group and what the engagement process with

that group entails, including meetings, participation in workshops, community functions, participation in working group committees, newsletters, problem-solving sessions, roadshows and more.

2.2 Communication and Engagement between Government and Farmers

2.2.1 An International Perspective

However, it is not only in South Africa that there seems to be gaps in communication between government and stakeholders. Jansen et al. (2019) states that the Dutch government laments that certain farmers seem to be “unreachable” and/or not interested in all education material and attempts to share best practices. They stress that effective communication with farmers is essential in order to change their behaviour and to improve their farm management. After a study to provide insight into the attitude of such farmers, they concluded that there are ample opportunities to reach “hard to reach” farmers, provided that the communication strategies are tailored to their specific needs. This demands a more pro-active approach on the part of government employees. Different types of farmers need to be approached in different ways and through different channels (Jansen et al., 2010).

Likewise, many Dutch farmers seem dissatisfied with government and goes as far as calling government unreliable (Roling & Wagemakers, 1998). They feel that authorities are not in touch with their thinking and ask for more two-way communication, respect for each other’s opinions and a readiness to look at common solutions. The farmers want to be more actively involved in policy making. They prefer more direct contact between themselves and government authorities, are unhappy with bureaucracy and slow decision making in government and feel uncertain about government’s role. Furthermore, they complain that government is not always visible.

In the UK, a five year trial involving more than 30 farmers revealed that farmers’ perceptions of and subsequent relationship with government institutions had undergone a big change over the last 50 years (Hall & Pretty, 2008). While the UK government has repeatedly stated its desire for a partnership approach with farmers, there is evidence to suggest a large “reality gap”. Farmers feel there is a physical and social distance between themselves and government institutions, specifically with regard to certain issues. They stated that they experience difficulty “buying-in” to government policies. Levels of trust in government institutions varied and the farmers

stated that government should work harder to rebuild strong working relationships with them (Hall & Pretty, 2008). Frewer, Howard, Hedderley and Shepard (1998) in a UK study found that after tabloids, newspapers, government ministers, ministries and members of parliament were the least trusted sources of information by farmers.

Research done by Palmer, Fozdar and Sully (2009) among Australian commercial farmers regarding their relationship and perceptions of their government (particularly their department of agriculture) echoes the same sentiment. The majority of farmers interviewed were dissatisfied and cynical with their department of agriculture. They complained that it is not accessible and that it handles issues inappropriately. Furthermore, they accused the department of being inconsistent, maintaining poor communication, not being transparent, lacking commitment and being bureaucratic. However, some indicated good relationships with individuals within the department.

Interestingly, the study showed that farmer's experiences with other government departments influenced their trust in the agricultural department. Overwhelmingly, they see other government departments as incompetent, inflexible, unco-ordinated and unwilling to take responsibility. They are of the opinion that government does not provide sufficient support, are indifferent, serve their own political interests and does not view them as important. They also disagree with government policies. All of this lead to an extreme lack of trust in the agricultural department and government as a whole. It resulted in them mistrusting communication from government sources. They indicated they prefer personal contact with the agricultural department, especially through government agricultural advisors (Palmer, Fozdar & Sully, 2009).

A study done by Dwyer et al. (2007) offers valuable insight into the communication behaviour and information uptake of farmers in England. According to Dwyer et al. (2007) government and its agencies should seek to work with established farmer network, groups and organisations. This avoids repetition and potential farmer confusion and increases efficiency. However, existing networks and groups may not reach all farmers.

Another valuable observation made by Dwyer et al. (2007) is that farmers must be involved in identifying problems and solutions. Effective knowledge transfer is a two-way exchange. Collectively developing solutions with farmers must be based on

partnerships. Standard methods such as simple brochures and mass media (particularly farm media) should be used to increase awareness.

A more personal approach such as face-to-face visits or practical demonstrations and farmer information days are extremely valuable and creates the ideal environment for two-way communication. Farmers are busy people and might not have the time to absorb overly complex messages. The study also showed that farmers have a need to be acknowledged and respected by government for the very important role they play as food producers (Dwyer et al., 2007).

According to Aarts, Humphreys and Le Gall (2014) farmers and agribusinesses in Europe and Ireland want to implement knowledge and innovations in order to optimise their enterprise and remain profitable. This leads to a better utilisation of resources, including land and labour. At the same time, it is in the best interest of government to optimise farming practices and agribusinesses. It leads to higher employment, greater direct and indirect taxes due to increased productivity and results in better welfare and food security for the general voting public.

Furthermore, governments develop and implements legislation to sustain or improve the quality of the environment through the reduction of the impacts of industries such as the agricultural sector. Farmers, agribusinesses and governments supply money for research and research facilities and provide means of dissemination and communication (Aarts, Humphreys & Le Gall, 2014).

2.2.2 An African Perspective

Farmers on the African continent report similar problems. The difference is that, due to a lack of financial resources, these farmers are more dependent on government assistance. According to Obidike (2011) farmers in Nigeria (in particular those in remote rural areas) feel that their progress is hindered by a lack of information provided by their agricultural department in critical areas such as new agricultural technologies, early warning systems (for drought, pests, diseases), improved crops, credit, market information etc. They say that timeous and up to date information is scarce, yet highly desired. Information dissemination in African cultures differs to that of Europe so it is important to note that, aside from traditional media such as print and broadcast media and other methods of engagement such as exhibitions and demonstrations, other

forms of information dissemination such as drama, dance and folklore play an important role and can be utilised by government communicators.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Of the four corporate communication models – press gentry, public information, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical - identified by Grunig and Hunt (in Steyn, 2002) the two-way symmetrical model is the most appropriate in ensuring effective engagement with stakeholders. The two-way symmetrical model would be the ideal model to investigate the relationship between Western Cape commercial farmers and the Western Cape Department of Agriculture as it would encourage negotiation between the department and commercial farmers and foster mutual understanding between the two parties. It promotes mutual benefit, understanding and respect. It is therefore through this lens that current engagement between the organisation and stakeholder group in question will be viewed.

According to Grunig and Hunt (in Steyn, 2002) this model suggests that mutual understanding between an organisation and its stakeholders can best be established by using the two-way symmetric model. While the asymmetrical communication model is also two-way, the goal is not balanced. It is focussed on persuasion. On the other hand, the two-way symmetrical model uses communication to negotiate with publics, resolves conflict, and promotes mutual understanding and respect between the organisation and its stakeholders (Sledzik, 2017). In the two-way symmetrical model the communication/public relations professionals listen to the concerns of both the clients and key publics and help them adapt to one another. They are mediators. PR professionals must represent the interests of all parties (Sledzik, 2017).

Therefore the question that is asked is: Is the current model of engagement being used by the organisation and stakeholder group under investigation the two-way symmetrical model (the best way to build relationships)? Or is it presently the information model, often used by government, which purpose is to merely disseminate information and is one sided only?

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Dimensions of Research

Burrell and Morgan (in Bhattacharjee, 2012:18) state that “the way social science researchers view and study social phenomena is shaped by two fundamental sets of philosophical assumptions: ontology and epistemology”. Ontology refers to our assumptions about how we see the world (in simple terms, it refers to the researcher’s world view) e.g. does the world consist mostly of social order or constant change? Epistemology refers to our assumptions about the best way to study the world e.g. should we use an objective or subjective approach to study social reality? According to Makwambeni (2017) ontology shapes epistemology and the latter can also be described as the way in which knowledge is acquired.

This study uses an ontology which sees the world not as objective, but subjective and social, consisting of people who each have their own thoughts and feelings and interpret the world around them differently. The study takes an interpretivist approach. According to Bhattacharjee (2012:18), if the researcher believes that the best way to study social order is through the subjective interpretation of participants involved, such as interviewing different participants and reconciling differences among their responses using their own subjective perspectives, they are employing an interpretivism paradigm. The interpretivism paradigm will be used in this study.

3.2 Research Design

A research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data. The choice of research design mirrors decisions about the importance assigned to a range of dimensions of the research process (Bryman & Bell, 2007). According to Bhattacharjee (2012) research design is a comprehensive plan for data collection in an empirical research project.

Data collection methods can be grouped into two categories: Positivist and interpretive (Bhattacharjee, 2012:35). Dooley (1995:350) defines positivism as an approach to knowledge based on the assumption of an objective reality that can be discovered with observed data. Positivist methods include methods such as laboratory experiments and survey research. They are aimed at theory testing, whereas interpretive methods are aimed at theory building. Positivist methods employ a deductive approach to research, starting with a theory and testing theoretical postulates.

According to Bhattacharjee (2012:35) interpretive methods employ an inductive approach that starts with data and tries to drive a theory about the phenomenon of interest from the observed data. In this study, interpretive methods will be employed. Interpretive research is based on the assumption that social reality is not singular or objective, but is rather shaped by human experiences and social contexts. Taylor (in Schwandt, 1998) explains that social reality consists a set of social facts that include the behaviours of individuals and the beliefs and so forth that describe the motivations for behaviour.

In this study, interpretive methods will be used to assess the relationship between the department and commercial farmers (with emphasis on the communication channels used).

3.3 Research Approach

The two above mentioned methods are not to be confused with quantitative and qualitative methods, which refer to the type of data being collected. Quantitative refers to methods such as scores, metrics, and surveys, while qualitative data includes interviews, observations and so forth. This study will use qualitative data for the following reasons:

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001) one of the main strengths of qualitative research is the comprehensiveness of perspective it gives researchers. It gives the researcher a deeper and fuller understanding of the topic under investigation. It is especially appropriate to research that defies simple quantification. Qualitative researchers gain insight into attitudes and behaviours of the sample group that is being studied. Berkwitz and Inui (1998) postulate that qualitative research is a form of inquiry that analyses information conveyed through language and behaviour. It is used to capture expressive information not conveyed in quantitative data about beliefs, values, feelings and motivations – all of which underlie behaviours. Gough (2020) concurs, stating that the information provided by qualitative research goes beyond the information that quantitative research provides. Qualitative data explains the reasoning behind a “yes” or “no” answer.

Babbie and Mouton (2001) further point to another advantage of qualitative research – flexibility. They postulate that qualitative research allows the researcher to modify

his/her research plan at any time and adapt methodology, time frame and other aspects of the study. This allows more control and liberty during the process.

Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) asserts qualitative researchers are after meaning. They state that qualitative research is concerned with the social meaning people attribute to their experiences, circumstances and situations. The aim of qualitative researcher is to extract meaning from their data. The focus of this research is words and texts, not figures. It is an intellectual, creative and rigorous craft. It is often used by researchers in the social and behavioural sciences. According to Mack et al. (2005) qualitative research provide valuable insights into the perspectives of study populations as well as contextually rich data. This is linked to the interpretivism paradigm which will be used in this study (see point 3.5). Interpretivism favours qualitative research methods.

Therefore, the researcher believes that the qualitative method is the best way to obtain the information needed to answer the research question and that it will shed light on the values and opinions of the research population by helping the researcher explore the human side of the issue under investigation.

3.4 Defining Qualitative Data

Swanson and Holton (2005) are of the opinion that qualitative data deal with meaning. Meaning is mediated primarily through language and action. Qualitative data is thus data in the form of words. According to Swanson and Holton (2005:234) the main task of the researcher during qualitative research is to “capture, understand, represent participants perceptions and meaning *through* and *in* their own words”.

3.5 Research Method/Data Collection

Bryman and Bell (2007) state that a research method is a technique for collecting data. It can involve a specific instrument, such as a self-completion questionnaire or a structured interview or participant observation. (In this method the researcher listens to and watches others.) Data collection is the process by which the researcher collects the information needed to answer the research question.

For this study, two types of data were collected namely primary and secondary data. Salkind (2010:12) states that a primary data source is an original data source, that is, one in which the data are collected firsthand by the researcher for a specific research purpose or project. Secondary data is the data already collected or produced by others

that contributes to the study. Examples are research reports, annual reports, media articles and recordings.

Qualitative data collection methods include interviews, focus groups and action research. For this study, data was collected from commercial farmers via comprehensive, qualitative questionnaires with open-ended questions. It was an effective way for the researcher to get answers to “how and why”, which was required for this qualitative study, as opposed to getting answers to questions on how much or how many (required in quantitative research).

The qualitative questionnaires allowed interviewees the opportunity to answer questions in their own time and space, while still giving them the opportunity to expand their answers and share their opinions and experiences. Commercial farmers are very busy people who do not have the time for long conversations and indicated to the researcher that they prefer questionnaires, which they can answer at their convenience. It allowed them to think about the answer to each question, without being “put on the spot”. It also permitted those farmers who wished to stay anonymous the chance to do so.

According to Debois (2019) the advantages of using questionnaires to gather data are the following:

- Questionnaires are practical: Apart from being inexpensive, questionnaires are also a practical way to gather data. They can be targeted to groups of the researcher’s choosing and managed easily. The format may also be adapted to suit the researcher’s needs.
- Questionnaires are convenient and quick to answer.
- Comparability: Completed questionnaires are easy to compare to one another and patterns that emerge can be spotted easily.
- Easy analysis and visualisation: Due to their format, the results of questionnaires are easy to read and simple to analyse.
- Respondent anonymity: Mail-in questionnaires allow respondents to remain anonymous. Those respondents who would not otherwise have been willing to complete questionnaire due to fear of their names being made public, also complete questionnaires.

- Questionnaires eliminate time constraints: When using online or email questionnaires there is no time limit. Respondents do not feel pressured to provide quick answers and can take their time to think about their answers before they complete the questionnaire and also provide more detailed answers.
- More truthful answers: With anonymous questionnaires, respondents often provide more honest answers. Research has proven that having a researcher present can lead to dishonest and more socially desirable answers as respondents often do not wish to offend the researcher/organisation in question.

Debois (2019)

According to Rahman (2019) there are a number of disadvantages to using questionnaires in research.

- Honesty of respondents: It is difficult for the researcher to know how truthful the respondents were.
- Different interpretations: Questions may be interpreted by respondents in ways the researchers did not intend, leading to information that is irrelevant.
- Lacking validity: Questionnaires are seen by some researchers as lacking validity as they provide information without adequate explanations.
- Potential poor response rate: Questionnaires may result in a low response rate as potentials respondents may decline to respond.
- Ambiguity: No clarification for ambiguous questions. Some experts argue that questionnaires are inadequate to understand human behavior, attitudes and feelings. Mouton (1996) emphasises that there are a number of things to be kept in mind during the data collection process. The researcher should set personal prejudices and biases aside, systematically and accurately record information given by interviewees and establish trust and report with the people being interviewed. It is important to collect reliable data.

In order to collect information on the way the Western Cape Department of Agriculture manages communication and relationships with commercial farmers, structured

interviews were also conducted with relevant senior management members of the department.

(Rahman, 2019)

3.6 Sample Selection

Sampling is the statistical process of selecting a subset (sample) of a population of interest for purposes of making observations and statistical inferences about that population. It is not possible to study entire populations because of feasibility and cost constraints and therefore a sample must be selected (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

According to O’Leary (2004) representativeness is not of the same importance in qualitative studies as in quantitative studies. The goal in qualitative studies is rich understanding that comes from the few, rather than the many. Applicability comes from the “lessons learnt” that might be applicable to broader populations (O’Leary, 2004).

The first step in the sampling stage was defining the target population. A population can be defined as all people or items with the characteristics that one wishes to study. In this case, the population consists of all commercial farmers in the Western Cape. (The reason that only commercial farmers in the Western Cape were chosen is that the Western Cape Department of Agriculture is only responsible for commercial farmers in the Western Cape; therefore commercial farmers in other provinces are not relevant to this study.)

The second step in the sampling process was choosing a sampling frame. A sampling frame is defined by Dooley (2005:351) as an available list of elements from which samples can actually be drawn, usually not a complete enumeration. In simple terms, it can be described as an accessible section of the target population (usually a list with contact information) from where a sample can be drawn. In this case a sampling frame was not available as the department does not have a database of commercial farmers.

The last step in the process was choosing a sample from the sampling frame. Two broad types of sampling exist – probability and non-probability sampling. According to O’Leary (2004), in random sampling each element of the population has an equal chance of selection. Whereas in non-random sampling (also referred to “purposive” sampling), some elements of the population have a zero chance of being selected. It

is important to note that this type of sampling is no longer viewed as inferior. It can credibly represent populations given that selection is done with the goal of representativeness in mind (O’Leary, 2004).

For this study, handpicked sampling (a purposive sampling method) was used. Welman and Kruger (2001) states that purposive sampling is the most important kind of non-probability sampling. Researchers rely on their experience, ingenuity and/or previous research findings to deliberately obtain units of analysis in such a manner that the sample they obtain may be regarded as being representative of the relevant population (Welman & Kruger, 2001:63).

Farmers were selected carefully to represent different regions in the Western Cape and a variety of commodities (crops and/or animals being farmed with). In this way, the researcher ensured that the input received represented the views of commercial farmers from across the sector and were well balanced. Twenty-five farmers, out of 4 300 in the Western Cape, were interviewed by way of questionnaires. The researcher considered this an adequate number to gain insight into the problem being investigated.

In order to ensure that input from a variety of farmers, farming with different agricultural commodities in all the districts (as allocated by the WCDoA) were received, farmers in all six districts were identified and interviewed. The selection of farmers interviewed were as follows (ha is short for hectares):

Resp. No	Town	Products farmed with	Farm size	Age	Number of years farming
Cape Metropole					
1	Kuils River	Vegetables	1.5 ha (intensive farming in tunnels)	30	5 years
2	Kraaifontein	Vegetables	40 ha	34	13 years
Cape Winelands					

3	Wellington	Buchu	157 ha	70	25 years
4	Paarl	Herbs	22 ha	66	27 years
5	Ceres	Fruit	18 ha	61	20 years
6	Montagu	Stone fruit and other fruit, wine grapes, citrus, cash crops	485 ha	53	26 years
Overberg					
7	Grabouw	Apples and pears	35 ha	47	5 years
8	Different farms in Overberg region	Poultry	Farms vary in size	51	22 years
9	Overstrand	Cattle, flowers, bees and seed crops	5000 ha	59	36 years
10	Villiersdorp	Alpacas	5 ha (intensive farming)	68	16 years
West Coast					
11	Malmesbury	Livestock	1800 ha	69	40 years
12	Mooreesburg	Wheat	3000 ha	45	21 years
13	Piketberg	Grain and small livestock	250 ha	44	25 years
14	Riebeeck-Kasteel	Fruit and cattle	200 ha	42	20 years
15	Citrusdal	Indigenous cut flowers	1100 ha	66	20 years
16	Leipoldtville	Potatoes and cattle	1800 ha	68	30 years
17	Graaffwater	Lucerne and carrots	705 ha	51	8 years

18	Vanryhnsdorp	Sheep	7000 ha	59	35 years
19	Bitterfontein	Sheep and goats	5627 ha	66	48 years
Eden					
20	Friemersheim	Sheep, pigs and chickens	40 ha	52	15 years
21	Mossel Bay	Dairy	800 ha	42	26 years
22	Uniondale	Seed crops and cattle	286 ha	75	44 years
Central Karoo					
23	Laingsburg	Wine grapes, fruit and vegetable seed	1500 ha	43	20 years
24	Merweville	Sheep	3284 ha	62	40 years
25	Murraysburg	Sheep, cattle and lucerne	8000 ha	52	52 years

As mentioned above, key members of the WCDoA were also interviewed. In this case, it was not necessary to draw a sample as both of the most relevant departmental officials could be interviewed, Ms Mary James (Head of Communication) and Dr Dirk Troskie, (responsible for Business Planning and Strategy, including stakeholder engagement).

3.7 Unit of Observation

The unit of observation for this study was commercial farmers in the Western Cape, actively involved in farming at the time of the study. The aim was to understand how commercial farmers viewed the department's current communication/engagement and relationship management with regards to commercial farmers, whether they thought it's adequate or not, which barriers exist that prevent them from engaging with the department and how they thought engagement between the department and themselves can be improved.

The WCDoA was also a unit of observation. Ms Mary James (Head of Communication) and Dr Dirk Troskie, (responsible for Business Planning and Strategy, including

stakeholder engagement) were interviewed. They gave insight into how the relationship with commercial farmers are currently being managed, whether they thought enough is being done to engage commercial farmers, which barriers exist that prevent them from engaging with commercial farmers with greater frequency and how they thought engagement between commercial farmers and themselves can be improved.

3.8 Data Analysis

According to Thorne (2000) data analysis is the most complex and mysterious of all of the phases of a qualitative project. Mouton (1996:169) explains that in qualitative studies, the researcher usually works with a wealth of rich, descriptive data. The overall coherence and meaning of the data is more important than the specific meaning of its parts. Therefore, methods of data analysis that are more holistic, synthetic and interpretative are used (Mouton, 1996:169).

According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003) there are two key stages in qualitative data analysis – the first requires managing the data and the second involves making sense of the evidence. The first step in data management involves identifying recurring themes or ideas. The next steps is to devise a conceptual framework or index and then sort or order the data in some way so that material with similar content is located together. The final step involves summarising or synthesising the data (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

According to Dudovskiy (2016) qualitative data can be analysed in the following way: Firstly codes should be developed and applied. Coding can be described as the categorisation of data. A 'code' can be a word or a short phrase that represents a theme/idea. All codes should be given titles. Secondly, themes, patterns and relationships should be identified. According to Dudvoskiy (2016) there are no generally applicable techniques in qualitative data analysis and the analytical and critical thinking skills of the researcher plays an important part. Therefore, qualitative studies will not yield the same result if repeated by a different researcher.

Nevertheless, there are methods that can be utilised to identify common themes, patterns and relationships in the responses obtained from interviewees, in relation to codes that have been specified in the previous stage. The following most popular and

effective methods of qualitative data interpretation, described by Dudvoskiy (2016) were employed by the researcher:

- Word and phrase repetitions: The data was scanned for words and phrases most commonly used by respondents, as well as words and phrases used with strong emotions. The graphs used, indicated the most frequently occurring thoughts/opinions/feelings of the respondents.
- Search for missing information: Points/issues not mentioned by respondents (although one would have expected them to refer to it) were discussed.
- Primary and secondary data comparisons: The findings of the questionnaires and interviews were compared with the findings of the literature review and comparisons, as well as differences, were discussed.

In addition to the above, noteworthy quotations from the answered questionnaires are presented in order to highlight major, recurring themes/ideas. After the process was concluded, conclusions were drawn. At the end, research findings were linked to research aims and objectives.

3.9 Ethics

Researchers are responsible for the integrity of the research process. The power to produce knowledge requires responsibility for integrity in its production (O'Leary, 2004). All attempts were made to ensure that this study was conducted in an academic, professional and ethical manner. Consent was obtained from the department and potential research participants before commencement of the study. The anonymity and confidentiality of participants were guaranteed. No deceptive practices were used and participants were given the right to withdraw from the research, if they felt uncomfortable. The researcher ensured that she complied with the research policies and guidelines of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

3.10 Contribution of Research

The study of stakeholder engagement between the department and commercial farmers (with a focus on the communication channels), will add to the general body of knowledge on how stakeholders should be engaged and managed. The "lessons

learned” and insight gained will be applicable to organisations and stakeholders in all sectors, not only the agricultural sector.

With regards to the agricultural sector specifically, the study hopes to make a significant and valuable contribution to literature on the management of relationships with commercial farmers in South Africa, which is currently very sparse. It is vitally important for the sake of food security, job opportunities and economic growth that the commercial farmers left in the country thrive. To do so they need support from various stakeholders in the sector, especially government. As highlighted by the literature review, commercial farmers in the country face a large number of challenges, and they need government’s resources, knowledge and influence if they are to make headway in overcoming these difficulties.

Information on which communication channels to use, and how to best engage with this stakeholder group in general, will greatly assist the department, other South African government department as well as other role players in the country’s agricultural sector to lend better support, to the benefit of all. In this case specifically, increased and better engagement with the department and utilisation of services on offer, will lead to improved farming practices, planning and infrastructure for Western Cape commercial farmers. This will boost their productivity and profits and strengthen the sector.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter described the research methodology, including the population, sample, data collection techniques as well as strategies used to ensure the ethical standards, reliability and validity of the study. The researcher made use of qualitative research methods. Questionnaires were used to collect the data from the chosen sample. Interviews were also conducted with members of the department. The study was conducted in an ethical and professional manner. The chapter also looked at the contribution of the research to stakeholder management literature.

In the next chapter, the research findings will be discussed and analysed.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRES, INTERVIEWS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents, discusses and analyses the findings of the study. The aim of the study was to evaluate the relationship between the Western Cape Department of Agriculture (hereafter referred to as the department) and commercial farmers in the Western Cape. To achieve the stated objective, the study mainly examined the communication channels. In addition, it also sought to understand the nature of engagement between the department and commercial farmers and the commercial farmers' perception of the department. In order to gain a two-sided perspective, both parties involved in the relationship - commercial farmers as well as senior managers from the department - were interviewed. The information obtained from the farmers will be discussed first and thereafter the information amassed from the department.

With regards to the information acquired from the farmers, the analysis of the findings are presented in the form of graphics (tables), followed by an interpretation of each table. Narrative from the completed questionnaires are also included, in the form of quotations, to provide a deeper understanding of the thoughts and feelings of the respondents. The information gathered from the department, regarding their relationship management with commercial farmers (especially with regards to communication channels) are also presented and discussed.

4.1 Questionnaires to Commercial Farmers

4.1.1 Questionnaire Themes

The questionnaires were divided into the following themes:

- An introductory/general section to assess the respondents' age, the commodities (products) with which they farm, location, the amount of years they have been farming and the size of their farm. This section served as an introduction and "set the scene" for the rest of the questionnaire.
- The next section focussed on the department's services on offer to farmers to ascertain which of the department's services commercial farmers are aware of, which services they make use of, and if they think the department contributes

to the success of their farm. The purpose of this section was to assess the level of interaction with the department, through the use of its services and resources.

- This was followed by a section on the communication and interaction between the department and its stakeholders. Respondents were asked to describe their recent interaction with the department, through which platforms they engage with the department and if they feel there is adequate engagement with them as commercial farmers, from the department's side. The aim of this section was to provide an understanding of the current interaction and engagement between the department and commercial farmers, through the use of communication channels.
- The fourth section dealt with perceptions. Farmers were asked about their perception of the department, issues that influence their perception and whether their perception of the department influence their interaction with the department and their use of the department's services. The main purpose of this section was to shed light on the degree to which farmers' perception affected their communication and interaction with the department.
- The questionnaire concluded with a section on the proposed services and methods of engagement/communication. They were asked which services they would like to see the department offer, which communication channels they would prefer, which actions the department would have to take to improve their level of interaction with the department and if their level of interaction would improve if their perception of the department changes. The aim of this section was to provide the department with information on farmers' preferences and guide the department to align their services and communication with the needs of farmers.

4.1.2 Analysis of Questionnaires

Question 2.1 What, according to you, is the main purpose of the department and to whom does it render services?

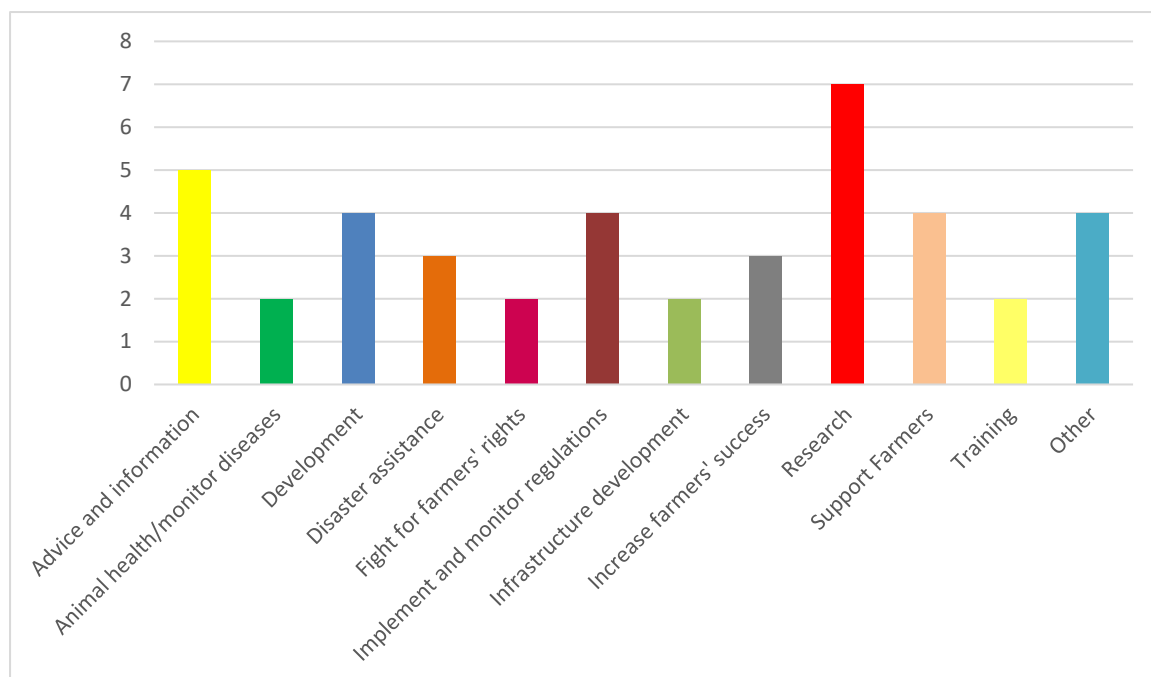


Figure 2.1.1: Farmers' perception of the main purpose of the department and to whom it renders services

Farmers were allowed to select more than one answer. The majority of respondents gave more than one answer to this question. As can be seen from the figure above, 7:28% was of the opinion that research is the/one of the main functions of the department. Of the respondents who answered this question 5:20% thought that the department exists mainly to give advice and information to farmers. Development of farmers, implementation and monitoring of regulations were perceived as being of the same importance by farmers (4:16%).

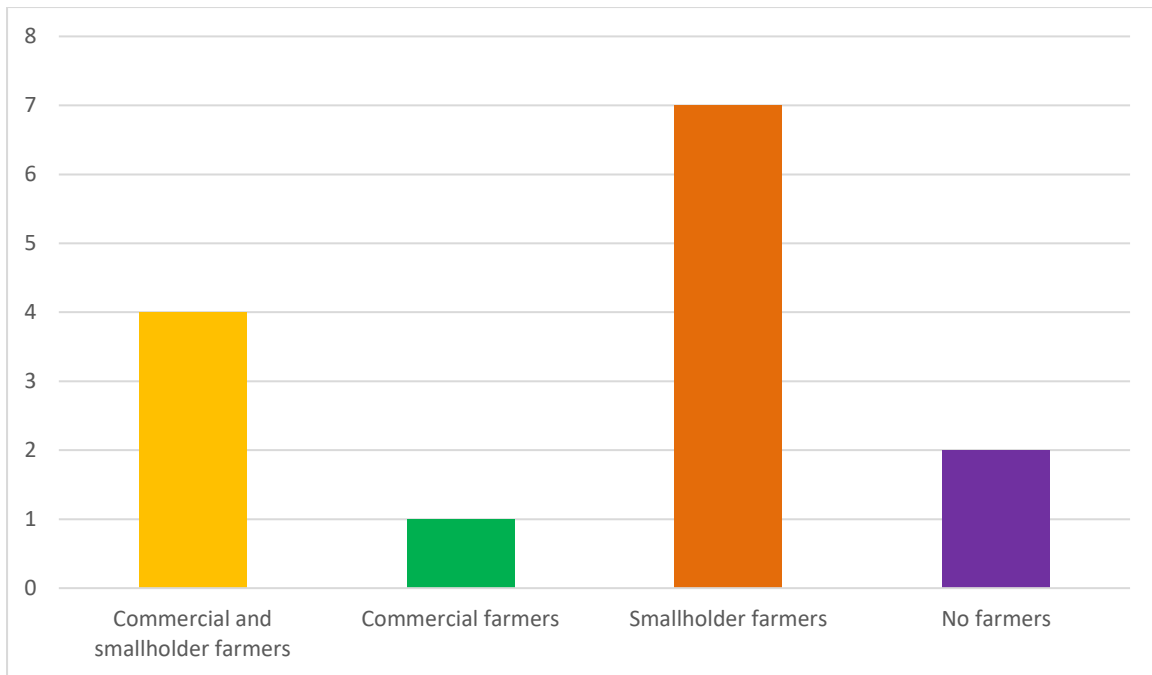


Figure 2.1.2: Publics services are delivered to

Only fifteen of the respondents answered this part of the question. Of the fifteen the majority (7:28%) said they feel the department is focussed on rendering services to smallholder farmers. Of the fifteen, 4:16% were of the opinion that the department assists smallholder as well as commercial farmers. Of the respondents, 1:4% felt that it is focussed on commercial farmers and 2:8% said that it doesn't render services to any farmers (smallholder or commercial). It is clear that there is a misperception among commercial farmers with regards to whom the department renders services to – they render services to all farmers (smallholder and commercial), although, in terms of the department's development agenda, smallholder farmers get more direct financial support.

Question 2.2. Which of the services of the department are you aware of?

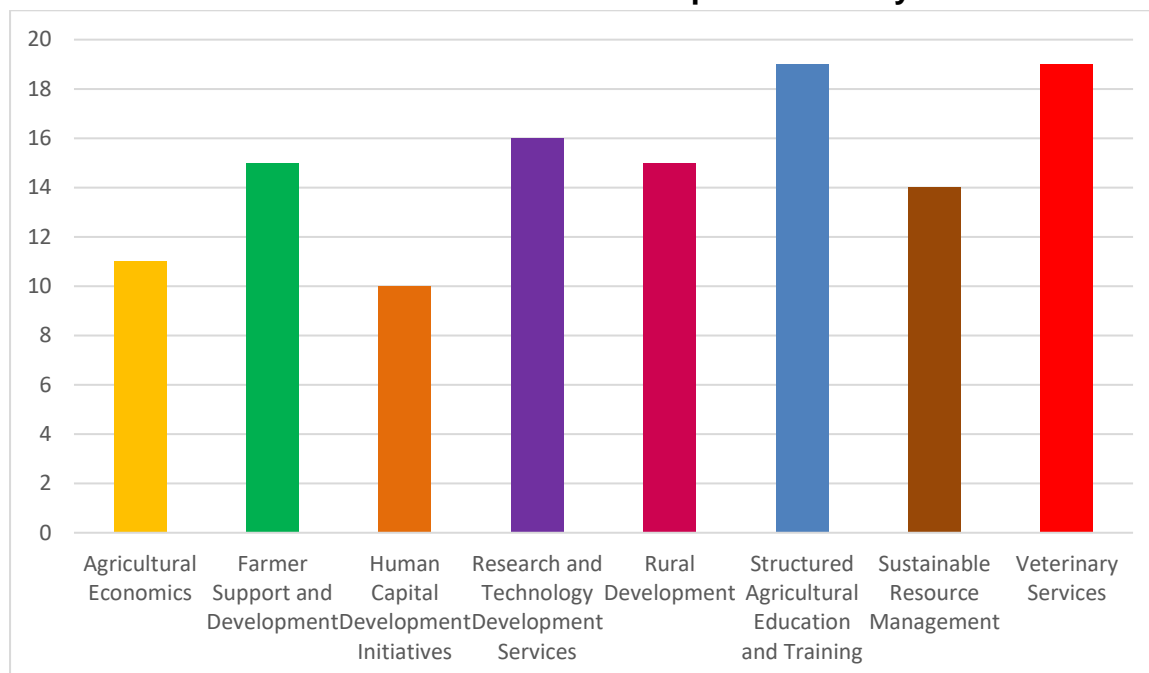


Figure 2.2: Departmental services farmers are aware of

Farmers could select all the options (services) they were aware of. The above figure show that the two services (programmes) respondents were most aware of (19:76%) are Structured Agricultural Education and Training (SAET) commonly known as Elsenburg College - and Veterinary Services. These were followed by Research and Technology Development Services (16:64%). Third on the awareness scale was Farmer Support and Development and Rural Development - both at 15:60%. Sustainable Resource Management (14:56%) came in at fourth place, followed by Agricultural Economics (11:44%). The service the least number of respondents were aware of was Human Capital Development Initiatives (10:40%).

The college has a very good reputation in the agricultural training industry and is considered one of the best institutions of agricultural training in Africa. Veterinary services is a very important programme in terms of ensuring animal health. The programme is involved in preventing and mitigating animal disease pandemics such as Avian Flu and perform a large number of the veterinary animal diagnostic services in the province at the vet lab. In addition, it is closely involved in all exports of animal products.

It is interesting to note that there was the same level of awareness of the Farmer Support and Development Programme and the Rural Development Programme. Farmer Support and Development is the largest programme of the department and could be considered its core programme, whereas Rural Development is the second smallest and most recently established. Human Capital Development initiatives is a small programme with a limited scope, possibly the reason for the low level of awareness.

Question 2.3. Are there any other services, not listed, which you were under the impression the department is responsible for?

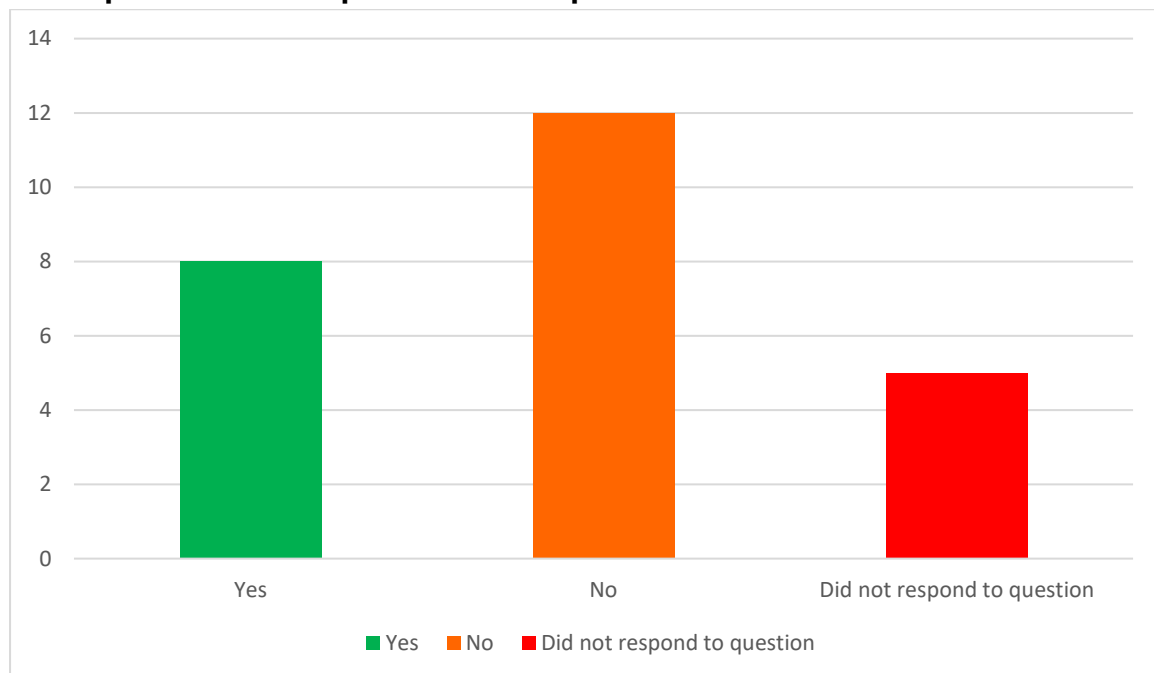


Figure 2.3: Services, not listed, that farmers were under the impression the department offers

From the above it can be seen that 11:44% of the respondents answered no to this question, 8:32% answered yes and 5:20% did not respond to the question at all.

The respondents that answered yes to this question motivated their answers as follows:

“Help with soil erosion.”
Respondent 5

“Drought relief.”
Respondent 7

“Special export market registrations and inspections.”
Respondent 14

“Drought support”
Respondent 17

“Soil and water conservation actions.”
Respondent 22

“Assistance with irrigation”
Respondent 23

Other motivations were the following:

“The communication of services/farm visits are important.”
Respondent 6

“They must do their job for which we pay tax.”
Respondent 9

“To protect farmers from the political onslaughts of uninformed, unknowledgeable vote seekers.”
Respondent 25

Question 2:4. Do you make use of the department’s services?

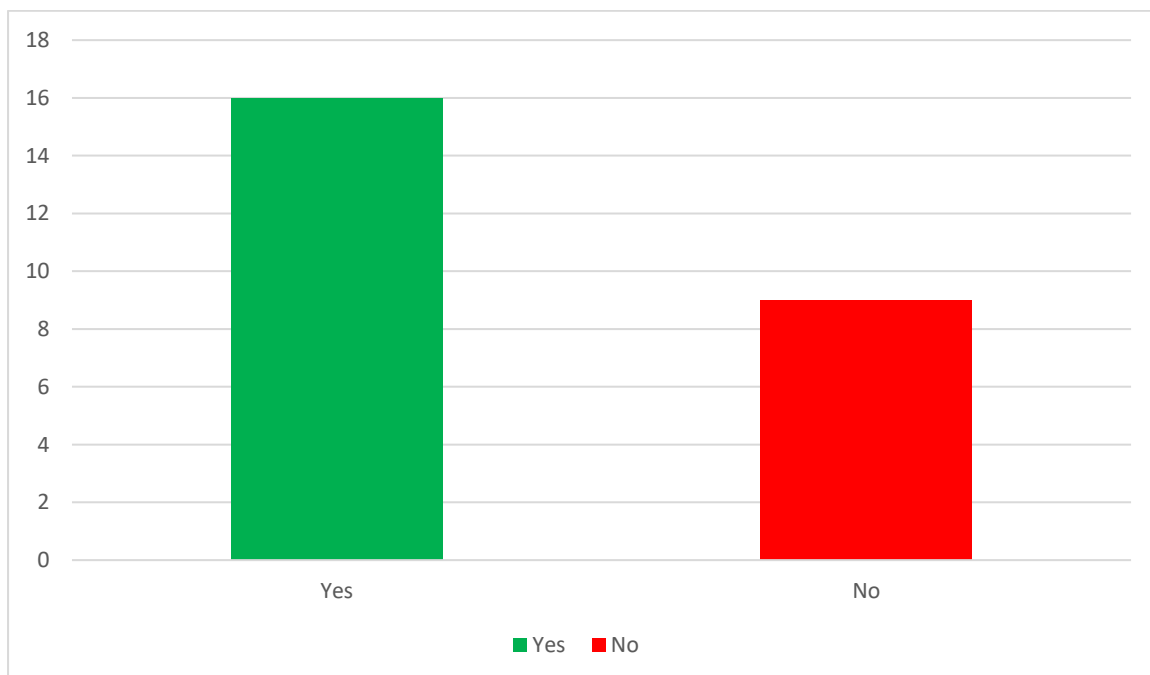


Figure 2.4.1: Utilisation of the department’s services

The above figure shows that 16 of the 25 farmers (16%) indicated that they make use of the department's services. Of the 25 farmers, 9:36% indicated that they do not make use of the department's services at all.

Reasons cited by those farmers who do not make use of the department's services and who elaborated on their reasons for not doing so were the following:

"I'm not aware of what is available and have no trust in government institutions."
Respondent 6

"Which services?!"
Respondent 9

"Most of the agricultural advisors have very little to no practical experience to assist farmers with practical problems, so I rather make use of the private sector."
Respondent 11

"I do not know of the services being offered due to a lack of communication."
Respondent 15

"There is minimum support available to commercial farmers."
Respondent 16

"The department is inaccessible."
Respondent 23

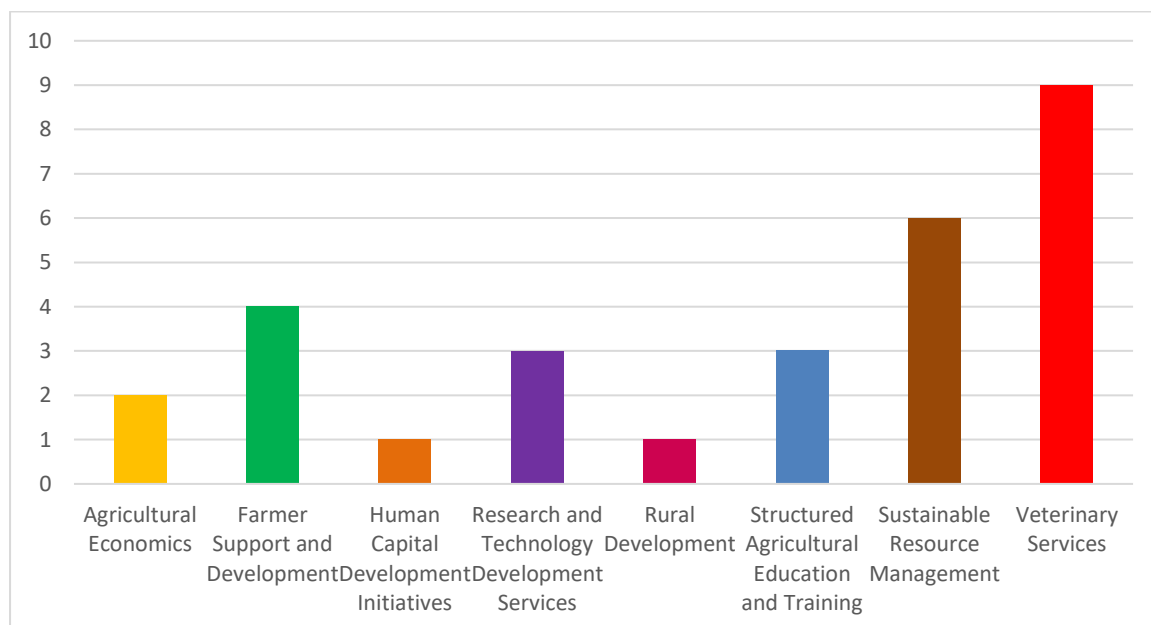


Figure 2.4.2: Departmental services utilised by farmers

The above figure shows that the most utilised departmental service, among those respondents who indicated they make use of the department's services was Veterinary Services (8:32%). This corresponds with awareness of the department's services, which indicated that Veterinary Services was one of the two services of which there is the highest awareness. The majority of these farmers indicated that they make use of the veterinary laboratory for autopsies when animal deaths occur. The rest indicated, that they use the department for advice on animal health and for export certification. A small percentage of the eight, didn't provide details of what they use the service for specifically. It illustrates that Veterinary Services is deemed as vitally important by farmers.

Sustainable Resource Management was indicated as the second most utilised service by farmers (6:24%). Farmers indicated that they used this service for drought support (monetary and advice), *Fruitlook* (a programme that assists farmers to use exactly the correct amount of water for irrigation and land use planning) and LandCare (caring for and protecting natural resources). From this one can deduct that the majority of farmers are concerned about the environment and want to farm in a sustainable manner.

The third most utilised service was Farmer Support and Development (4:16%). The farmers who indicated they made use of this service said they attend farmer information days. They also ask advice from the agricultural advisors.

The fourth most utilised service was (jointly) Structured Agricultural Education and Training and Research and Technology Development Services, (3:12%). For the former, respondents indicated they made use of the courses on offer. For the latter, farmers indicated that they make use of analytical services (e.g. analysis of soil samples) and talks by researchers on research farms. It is surprising that Research and Technology Development Services are so low on the list, considering the reach and size of this programme. A possible reason could be that the results are not communicated well enough or that they are not aware of the existence of the service.

Agricultural Economics Services are the second least utilised services (2:8%). The services farmers utilised the least are Human Capital Development Initiatives and

Rural Development (1:4%). It is understandable that these two are low on the list as these are very small programmes with a limited reach and budget.

Question 2.5: In your opinion, does the department contribute in any way to the success of your farm/add value to your farm?

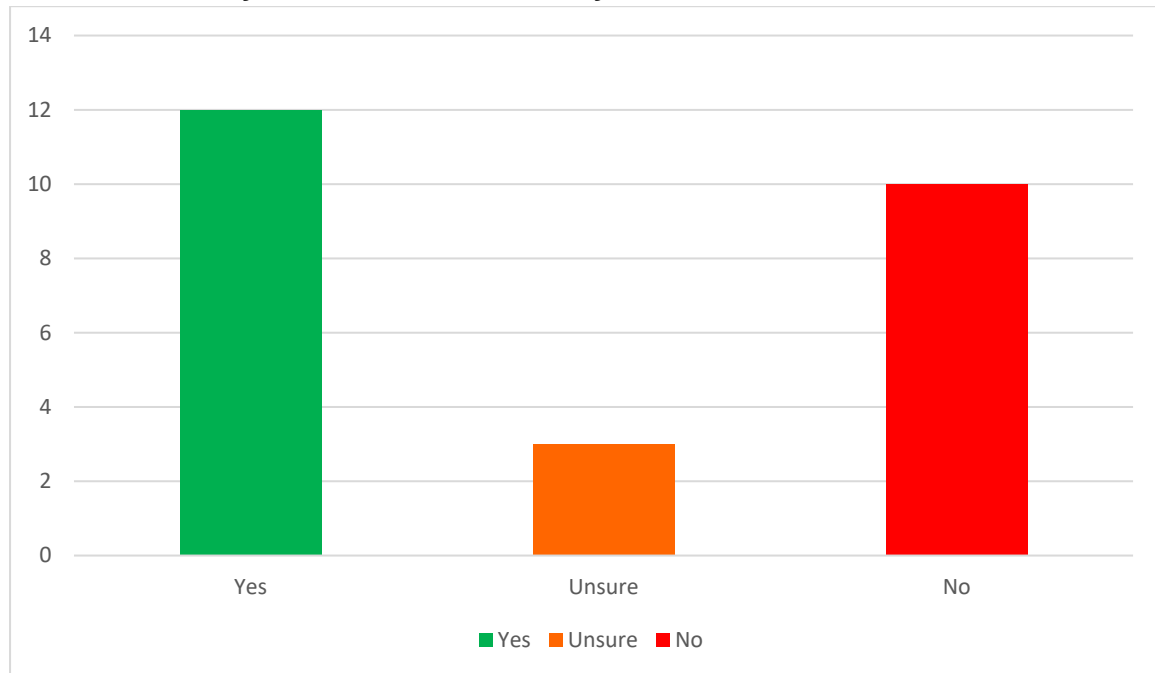


Figure 2.5: Contribution/value added by the department

The above figure shows that the 12:48% of the farmers interviewed felt that the department contributes/adds value to their farms. Of the respondents, 3:12% were unsure and 10:40% felt that the department does not contribute to their farms/add value at all. Therefore the percentage of farmers who felt that the department contributes/adds value to their farms were the majority. The farmers who responded 'no' to the question did not elaborate on their reasons for saying so, but the majority of them were farmers who indicated that they do not make use of the department's services.

Of the farmers who answered positively, six elaborated on their answers as follows:

"Yes, as it is a partner in financing my farming venture. Although the support sometimes feels limited to financial support, it does offer training and mentoring."

Respondent 1

"I don't have a specific example that I can think of, but all interaction leads to growth. The department's info days and functions have opened doors of communication to other farmers, industry role players and government departments."

Respondent 8

"Yes, I do not have all the skills and finance to deliver all the functions and support to my farm and workers on my own."

Respondent 12

"Yes, through any research or animal health and other support initiatives."

Respondent 13

"Yes, but more could be done."

Respondent 25

Question 3.1: Describe all interaction you've had with the department in the last 18 months, if any. If none, please describe briefly why not.

"A business plan was drawn up by myself and presented to government reps in order to get support."

Respondent 1

"I made use of animal health as well as training in agri processing and participated in farmer information days."

Respondent 2

"I interacted with the Sustainable Resource Management programme, did a Fruitlook course, attended meetings with regards to drought and water saving/water restrictions and interacted with the department with regards to alien invasive plants."

Respondent 3

"I interacted with LandCare officials with regards to drought support and environmental protection at farmers' society meetings."

Respondent 4

"Visit from livestock expert – vaccination of guard dog."

Respondent 6

"The department visited my farms and abattoir in the last 18 months. I believe this visit was very informative for all present and it has opened the doors for potential further growth into Africa."

Respondent 8

“Through the Stellenbosch vet lab and liaised with two gentleman from the department at an alpaca related meeting.”

Respondent 10

“The management and handling of animal health and bio security were discussed and handled by them. Import and export to Namibia documentation was handled by them, especially with regards to drought feed and the importing of animals.”

Respondent 11

“I interacted with the department with regards to drought management and made use of veterinary services.”

Respondent 12

“Special export market registrations and inspections.”

Respondent 14

“Someone from the Department of Agriculture from Clanwilliam called me and asked me whether I would fill in a questionnaire, but it never arrived.”

Respondent 15

“I applied for drought support.”

Respondent 16, Respondent 17, Respondent 18, Respondent 24 and Respondent 25

“I interacted with LandCare with regards to fencing of farms and conservation of plants and animals.”

Respondent 19

“I tried interacting with the vets. The person in our area is not able to speak Afrikaans at all (in an area where 90% and more of commercial and upcoming farmers are Afrikaans speaking!) He also does not try to interact with commercial farmers at all - in contrast with the previous person who did excellent work.”

Respondent 22

“Interview on RSG Landbou (produced by the Department), attended the Female Entrepreneur in Agriculture event and interacted with officials at Nampo Cape.”

Respondent 23

It can be seen that the majority of the farmers' (7 out of the 13 respondents: 54%) interaction with the department centred around Veterinary Services (animal health, vaccinations, abattoir inspection, veterinary laboratory, bio security and import/export certification). Four out of the 13 respondents (31%) indicated that their interaction with the department pertained to Sustainable Resource Management (drought management and support/water saving, invasive plants and animal/plant

conservation). Others that were mentioned - to a lesser extent - were business plans, training and attendance of departmental events. These results correspond with the results of question 2.4, which showed that the service the majority of farmers made use of were Veterinary Services, followed by Sustainable Resource Management services.

Question 3.2: Through which platforms are the department currently engaging with you?

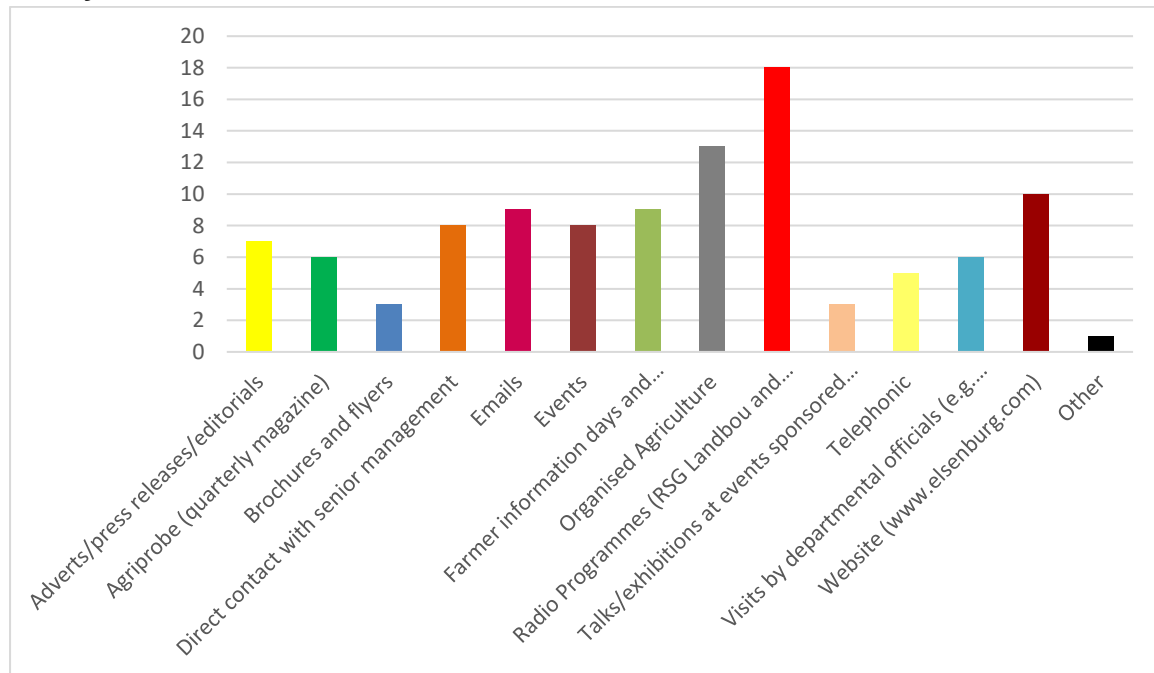


Figure 3.2: Departmental engagement platforms

The above figure illustrated that the departmental radio programmes, hosted on a weekly basis on RSG radio station, were well received and popular among commercial farmers. This is understandable as RSG has a wide reach and is the ideal platform to reach Afrikaans speaking commercial farmers.

The department has a close relationship and frequent interaction with organised agriculture in the province (Agri Western Cape, AFASA, BFASA). These organisations represent the majority of commercial farmers in the province. Important information pertaining to the sector are communicated by the Head of the Department and senior management to the management of these organisations, who relays it to their farmers. Senior management members are also regular speakers at the conferences of the above mentioned organisations, where farmers get the opportunity to interact directly

with them. It is therefore understandable that these platforms are the second most popular way in which farmers engage with the department.

The third most popular way of interacting with the department was the departmental website – www.elsenburg.com – which is well known amongst agricultural stakeholders. Much effort goes into keeping the website up to date, “modernising” the look and feel of the website and promoting it. It is good to see that this effort pays off. It is the platform farmers use to look up important information and download forms such as drought assistance application forms.

Close on the heels of the website were emails – a popular method of communication amongst people these days – also commercial farmers. This is the preferred method of communication between many farmers and officials. The department also has a popular public enquiries email address – info@elsenburg.com, which is a frequently used and trusted communication platform in itself as the emails are monitored and answered frequently with reliable information.

Events and direct contact with senior managers were in fifth place. The department hosts a variety of different events annually to which it invites and engage with stakeholders. The following are examples of these events:

- ❖ **The Agricultural Female Entrepreneur Competition and Agrifemina:** Females (agri workers, farmers, agri processors etc.) are acknowledged and rewarded for their contribution to agriculture.
- ❖ **The Prestige Agri worker Competition:** Agri workers are acknowledged for the important role they play in food security.
- ❖ **Agricultural career exhibitions:** The aim of these events is to promote the variety of agricultural careers among the youth and encourage them to follow these career in order to ensure the sustainability of the sector.
- ❖ **Exhibitions at agricultural expos:** The departments hosts exhibitions at various agricultural expos e.g. Nampo Cape. The goal is to create awareness of its different services, promote the use of it and interact with farmers and other role players in the agricultural sector, answer questions and address concerns.
- ❖ **First Thursday events:** The Minister of Agriculture and senior departmental officials are available to answer questions and have discussions with anyone

who wishes to speak to them. It is currently held in Cape Town only, but is being expanded to other regions.

- ❖ **Stakeholder meetings:** The leadership of agricultural bodies such as Hortgro, Vinpro, the Red Meat Producers Organisation and also that of organised agriculture such as Agri Western Cape and AFASA are invited to these events to provide important new information from the side of the department, discuss important issues affecting stakeholders such as drought and diseases and to address stakeholders' needs and concerns. These organisations are consulted and input gained every time the department is in the process of drawing up a new Strategic Plan (five year plan) and Annual Performance Plan (APP).
- ❖ **World Food Day:** This is a large, significant departmental event, held in a different rural development node each year. The poorest of the poor are assisted through the establishment of food gardens and chicken coups, food are collected and distributed to NGOs in the area and community members and agricultural stakeholders in the area are invited to the big hand-over event.
- ❖ **Budget speech:** Agricultural stakeholders are invited annually to attend the Minister of Agriculture's budget speech. They get the chance to speak to him one-on-one, should they wish to do so.

These events are just a few examples. Some events are hosted on an *ad hoc* basis, such as Information Symposiums for emerging/black farmers.

The *Agriprobe* (quarterly news and research magazine of the department) and visits by departmental officials were the third least popular method of engagement. It is surprising that the former is not a more popular method of engagement as 10 000 copies of the magazine are printed and distributed on a quarterly basis. These are mailed to agricultural stakeholders on the mailing list, distributed at departmental events, agricultural conferences etc. so one would have expected it to have a wider reach. The fact that not many farmers have engagements with agricultural advisors (also called extension officers) are easier to comprehend as these individuals interact more with smallholder farmers since they need more advice and assistance (financial etc.).

The fact that telephonic engagement is not a sought after way of communication is understandable as many commercial farmers make use of other methods such as emails.

Brochures and flyers, along with talks/exhibitions at events were not popular with respondents as a way of engaging with farmers. This is understandable as both are distributed/presented at limited events such as the annual Agri Western Cape Conference and the Cabinet Meets Agriculture event (where members of the provincial cabinet gets to meet with senior management and learn more about the department's various services and projects). Brochures and flyers are also available in the reception areas of the department's head office as well as the regional offices. The reading of brochures and flyers is often seen as a waste of precious time by busy farmers.

Unspecified manners of communication was seen as the least important by respondents.

Question 3.3: Do you feel that there is sufficient engagement from the side of the department with you, as a commercial farmer?

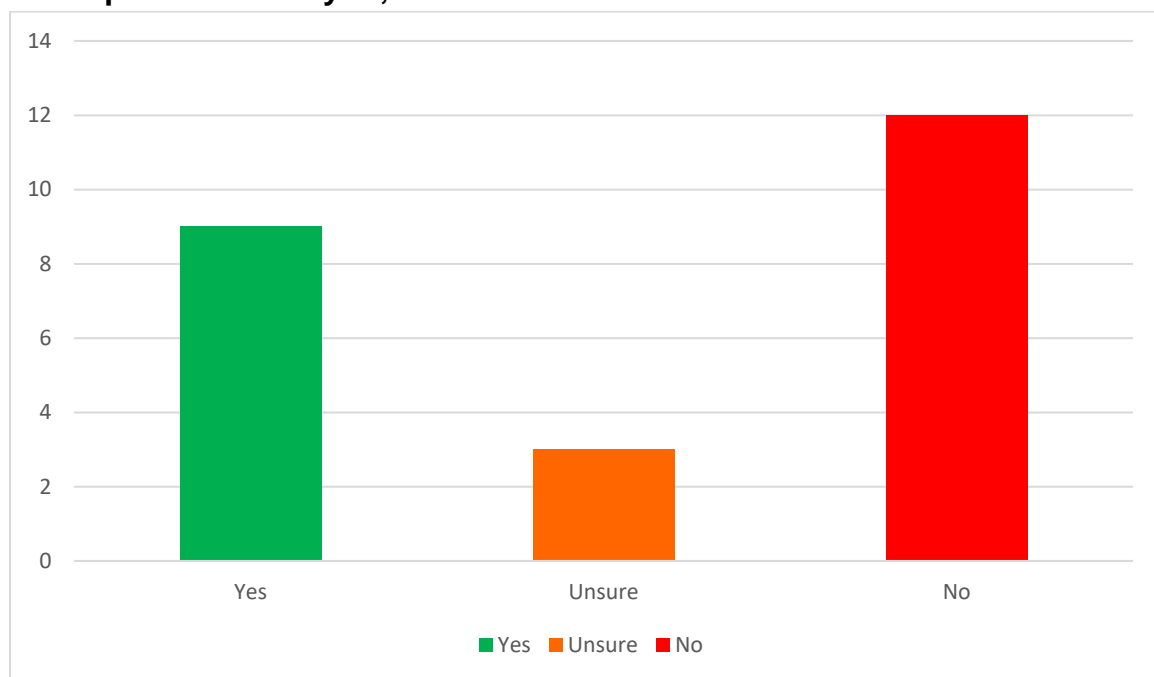


Figure 3.3: Engagement from the department with commercial farmers

36% of farmers answered yes, 3% are unsure 48% answered no.

Farmers who indicated they are unsure motivated as follows:

“I wish I had more. I requested a meeting with the Minister of Agriculture, Dr Ivan Meyer, months ago by means of a letter to one of the senior managers. Have had no response from either. It would be good to have more interaction and be made aware of more info days and media. I receive no info on any of the items mentioned above.”

Respondent 8

“I have an objection that everything is in English – the Agriprobe for example. To force it down our throats show contempt to what I, I as an Afrikaans farmer, mean to the country and have meant!”

Respondent 25

“I don’t know. I cannot see what interaction is needed.”

Respondent 2

Farmers who answered “no” indicated the following reasons:

“No, I believe more vigorous communication is needed to ensure success where government has made an investment. It should build more bridges with regards to giving access and ensuring networking between farmer in a similar field, size and even age”

Respondent 1

“No, there is no engagement from the department regarding my farming efforts”.

Respondent 15

“No. An example is the recent announcement of the law on the monitoring of water usage. I am of the opinion that the department should have played an extremely important role to ensure the positive communication of the information and also give positive support to the execution thereof.”

Respondent 6

“No, commercial farmers are separated from emerging farmers.”

Respondent 7

“No, you sit in your offices and spend our hard earned tax money. We, on the ground, do not exist for you anymore.”

Respondent 9

“No, we are not made aware sufficiently of available services.”

Respondent 9

“No, the department should reach out to commercial farmers more.”

Respondent 16

“No, the department should market its services better.”

Respondent 23

“No, after serious flood damage a few years ago much time and effort were spent on surveys, many visits by departmental officials and presentations. The amount of money for assistance to farmers were announced in the press, but not a single cent ever reached the farmers.”

Respondent 22

“No, no funds are made available to commercial farmers.”

Respondent 17

Question 3.4: Do you respond when the department tries to communicate and engage with you? If not, why not?

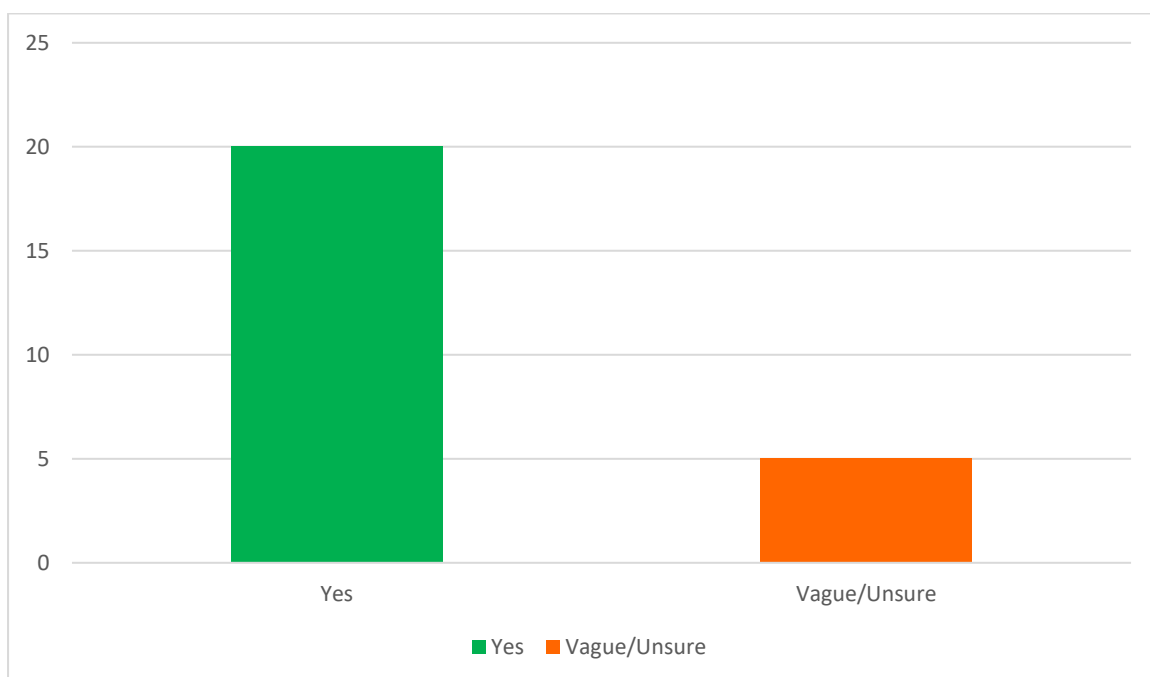


Figure 3.4: Response from engagement attempts by farmers

Of the respondents 20:80% answered positively and 5:20% were unsure or gave vague/inconclusive responses. It would therefore appear that the majority of respondents do not try to deliberately block engagement/interaction attempts from the department or try to avoid the department. The vague/inconclusive responses were the following:

“It would depend what it was. There is already so much paperwork to deal with that if it was likely to take a long time to read and respond, I wouldn’t do it.”

Respondent 4

“Yes, if it was a positive matter.”

Respondent 5

“Unsure.”

Respondent 6

“Which attempts to engage?”

Respondent 9

“No, I cannot respond if I do not receive any communication from the department.”

Respondent 15

4. Departmental Perceptions

4.1 Current Perception of The Department

On a scale of 1 – 10 with 1 very negative and 10 very positive, what is your current perception of the department, how do you view it?

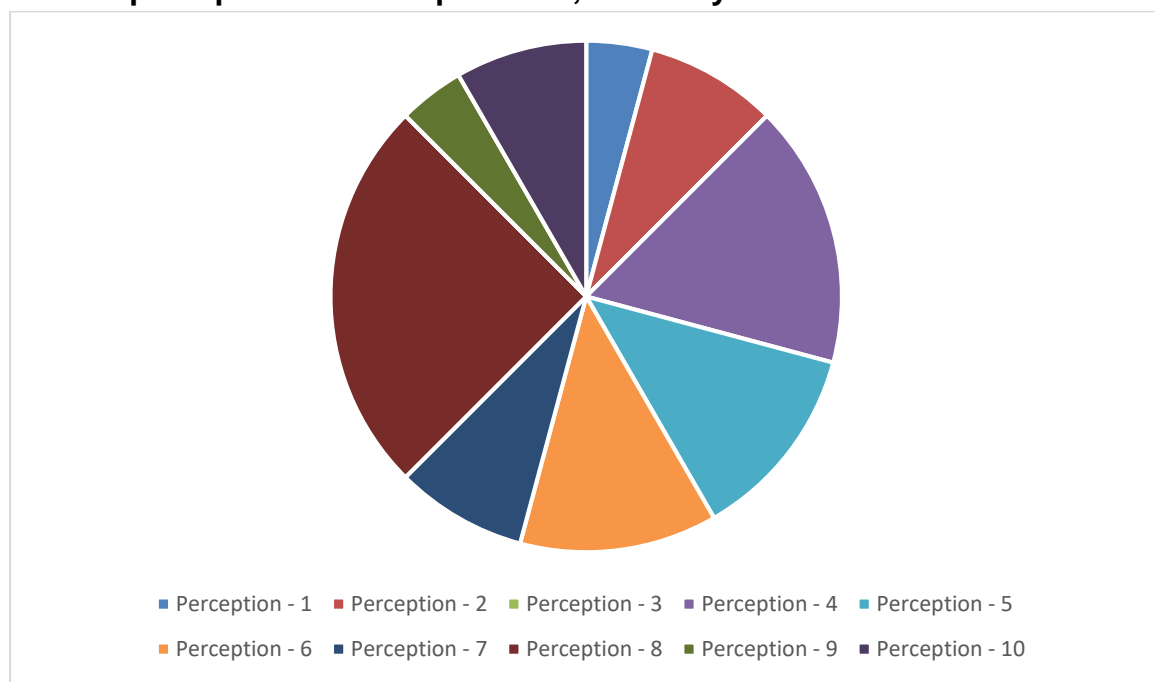


Figure 3.4: Farmers' perception of the department

Respondents were asked to rate their current perception of the department on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being very negative and 10 being very positive. The above pie chart shows that the majority of respondents (6:25%) gave a rating of 8, followed by a rating of 4, a rating of 5 and 6.

The reasons the respondents with a high rating (8 – 10) gave were the following:

“The Elsenburg website is very handy. Input from departmental officials in meetings are good. The department is very prominent on radio.”

Respondent 7

“I really love the department and feel they are passionate, motivated and driven. It feels like a hip and happening team of pro-active people. I would just like some more interaction.”

Respondent 8

“I have direct contact with senior departmental official that clearly make a positive contribution.”

Respondent 3

“I do believe that it is important to promote agricultural staff with incentives etc. and the department is particularly good at that.”

Respondent 10

“The Ministers of Agriculture support agriculture.”

Respondent 24

“Communication is good, they are interested and give advice.”

Respondent 19

“In comparison to some other provincial departments of agriculture I’ve had contact with, the department is very good.”

Respondent 18

The reasons provided by respondents who gave the department a mediocre rating (5 – 7) were the following.

“I believe the department is doing what it should do and is successful at that, but I really think it can do much better and contribute much more to the success of all farmers. Communication of opportunities to export produce and to create ventures to produce in bulk to specific markets (local and international) and invest in infrastructure that encourages market engagement is key and not what I am currently experiencing. There is not real engagement from the department, besides if you make a request.”

Respondent 1

“I am sure they are trying to carry on with research and training under the financial constraints we are all facing.”

Respondent 4

“There is room for improvement.”

Respondent 12

“About certain services, very little information is given to farmers on the ground.”

Respondent 13

“It is not safe to farm anymore and the department is not doing anything to try and improve the situation.”

Respondent 16

Reasons provided by respondents who gave the department a low rating (1 – 4) were the following:

“I don’t believe there is really a drive for agriculture among officials, farmers have to make things happen themselves.”

Respondent 5

“They add little/no value to my farm”

Respondent 14

“As far as I’m concerned the department does not exist.”

Respondent 15

“We were in the worst drought in years and the department gave no support to dairy farmers.”

Respondent 21

“I get the impression the department is not interested in commercial farmers.”

Respondent 22

Question 4.2: Are there any issues that affect your perception of the department?

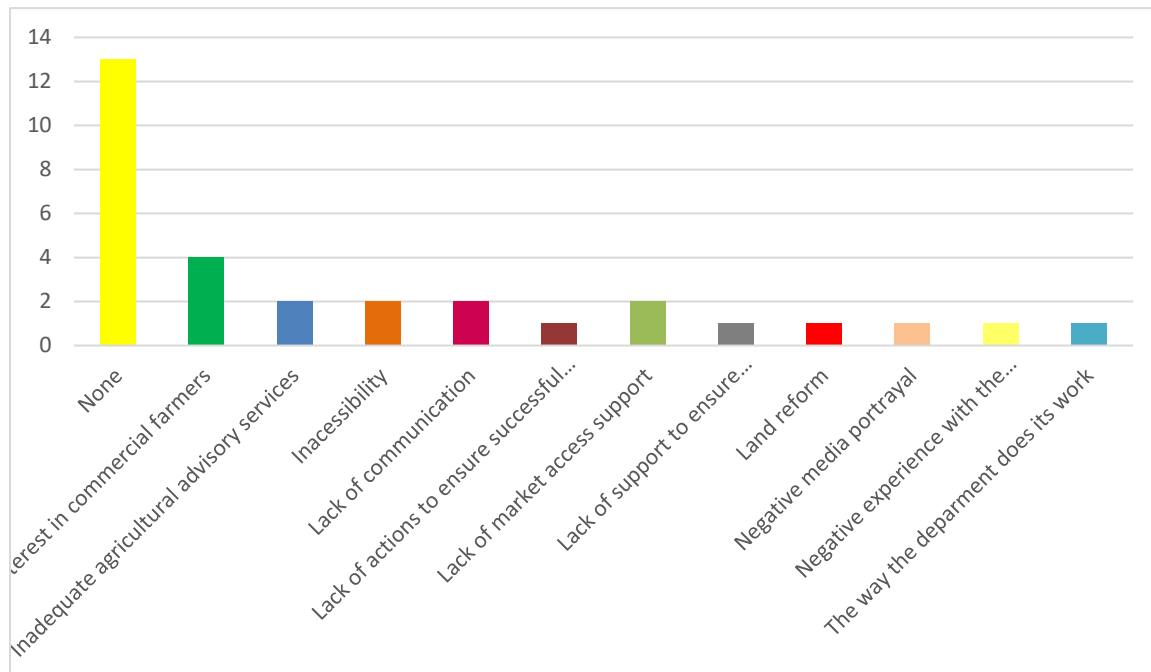


Figure 4.2: Issues that affect farmers' perception of the department

Thirteen of the 25 respondents (52%) indicated that there are no issues that affect their perception of the department. Of those who indicated that there are issues that affect their perceptions, the majority cited a lack of interest in commercial farmers. Inadequate advisory services, lack of communication, inaccessibility of the department and lack of market access support were the second most mentioned issues that affect their perceptions of the department. Other issues cited were a perceived lack of actions to ensure successful farmers, land reform, negative portrayal of the department in the media, a negative experience with the department and the way the department operates.

Question 4.3: Does the media and the way in which certain issues are portrayed (for example farm murders, drought and expropriation without compensation) influence your perception of the department?

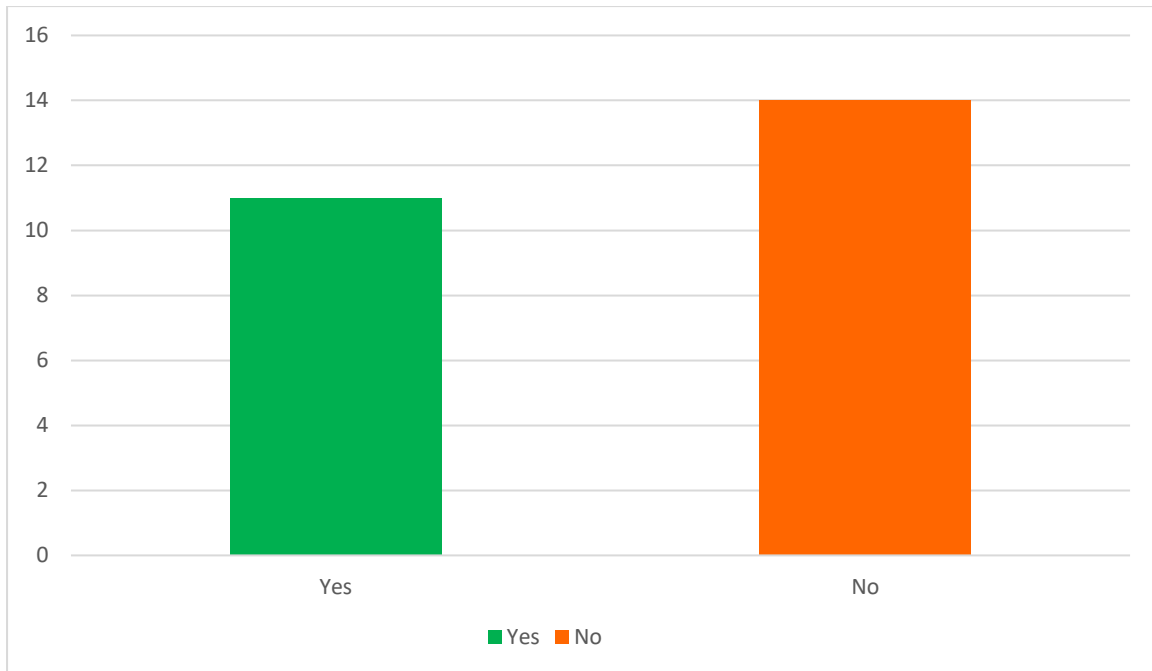


Figure 4.3: Influence of farmers' perception by issues

As can be seen in the above figure 11 of the respondents (44%) almost half, answered yes and 14:56% answered no. Only three of the respondents who answered yes elaborated on their answer:

“Yes, because they are very quiet about those issues.”
Respondent 5

“Yes, the department creates the impression that it is uninvolved/unknowledgeable and aloof with regards to commercial agriculture.”
Respondent 14

“Yes, the department just puts these issues aside and does not put their side of the story on the table.”
Respondent 25

Question: 4.4 Does your perception of the department influence your use of the department's services/level of interaction?

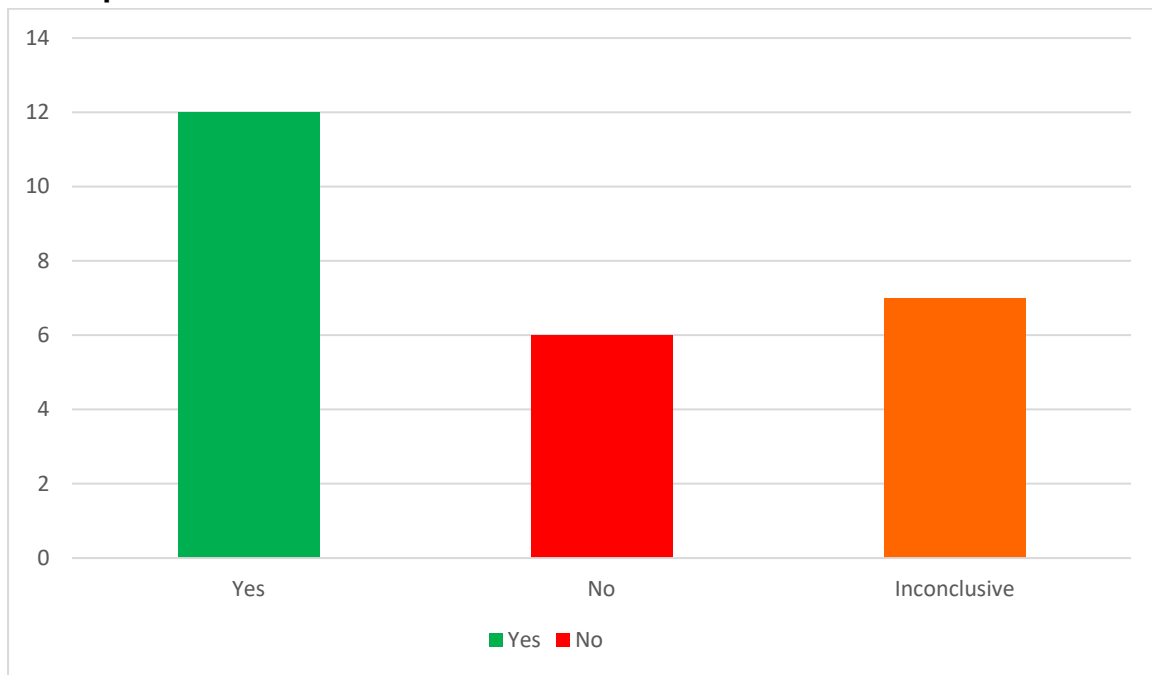


Figure 4.4: Influence of perception on use of services

The above chart shows that the majority of respondents (12:48%) indicated that their perception of the department influenced their use of the department's services.

Three of the 12 respondents who replied yes to this question indicated that, because they have a good perception of the department, they make use of the department's services more often. Nine of the 12 respondents said that, due to the fact that they have a negative perception of the department, they made less/no use of the department's services. Some of their answers were the following:

"I have a perception of all government departments being difficult to communicate with, i.e. phones not being answered, difficult to speak to the right person, so I don't even bother trying."

Respondent 4

"I can't communicate in my own language and officials are uninformed."

Respondent 17

"Yes, the department isn't interested in commercial farmers anyway."

Respondent 21

"The department doesn't have experience with regards to commercial farmers."

Respondent 14

5. Proposed/Preferred Services, Communication and Engagement

5.1 Which services, currently not on offer by the department, do you need and would you make use of?

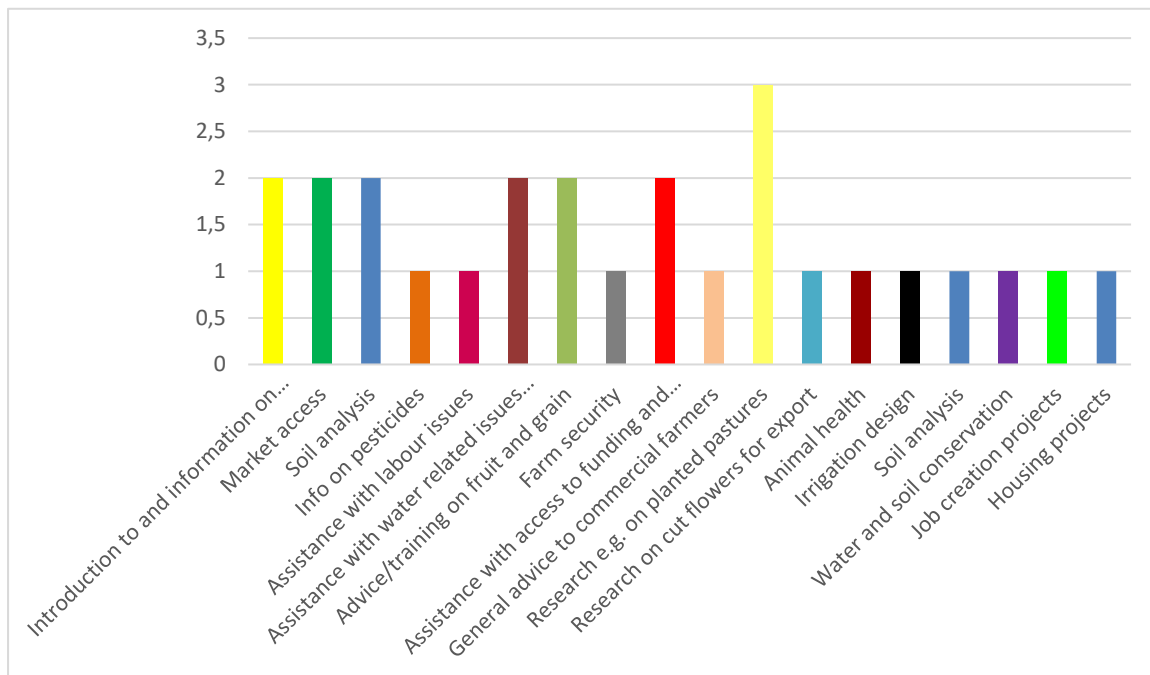


Figure 5.1: Proposed services

Eight out of the 25 respondents (32%) said they were satisfied with the current services and/or that they have no recommendations to make.

Those who made suggestions said the following:

“Information on similar farmers and opportunities. Market access and funding access.”
Respondent 1

“Soil analysis, spray information for plants.”
Respondent 4

“Assistance with labour issues, in co-operation with the Department of Labour.”
Respondent 6

“Assistance with application to establish irrigation dams and assistance with water license verifications.”
Respondent 7

“Introduction to farmers on international level and Introduction to markets in Africa.”
Respondent 8

“Technical advice/support with the planting of fruit.”

Respondent 14

“Research in cut flower development for the export market”

Respondent 15

“Farm security, loans”

Respondent 16

“Advice to commercial farmers, like in the old days. Too much politics at the moment!”

Respondent 1, Respondent 9 and Respondent 17

“Animal health, training on grain production and research.”

Respondent 13

“Irrigation design, soil analysis.”

Respondent 14

“Water for farmers and water rights.”

Respondent 20

“Research on local level e.g. planted pastures. Water and soil conservation (none at the moment), client friendly vet services.”

Respondent 22

“Job creation projects, research projects, housing projects.”

Respondent 25

It should be noted that quite a few of the services mentioned are already on offer by the department e.g. soil analysis, animal health and research. The problem is therefore a lack of knowledge of these services on the side of the farmers, rather than a lack of services by the department. Other frequently mentioned proposed services such as water for farmers and water licenses are the mandate of other departments, (in this case the national Department of Water and Sanitation). However, it appears that farmers may be unaware of this. Another example is housing projects, which is the responsibility of the Department of Human Settlements. The department may not get involved, nor does it have the necessary funds to erect housing on farms. It would seem that some farmers are confused with regards to which services the department is responsible for.

Question 5.2: Which methods of communication/Interaction do you prefer and would you make use of?

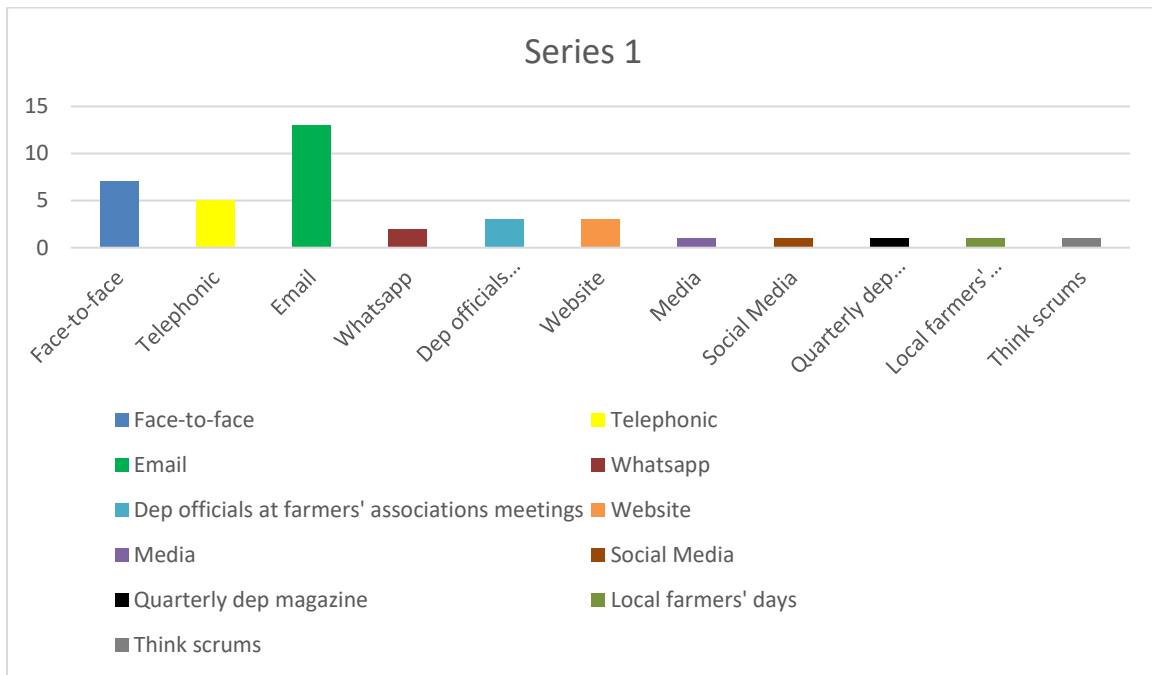


Figure 5.2: Preferred methods of communication

As can be seen above, the majority of farmers would prefer communication per email (13:52%), followed by face-to-face (7:28%) and telephonic (5:20%). Interaction with departmental officials and communication via the website were both the fourth most preferred way of communication, followed by WhatsApp (2:8%). Media in general, social media and the quarterly departmental publication (*Agriprobe*) were rated as the least preferred methods of communication.

Question 5.3 Are there any measures the department would need to take to increase your level of interaction and engagement with it?

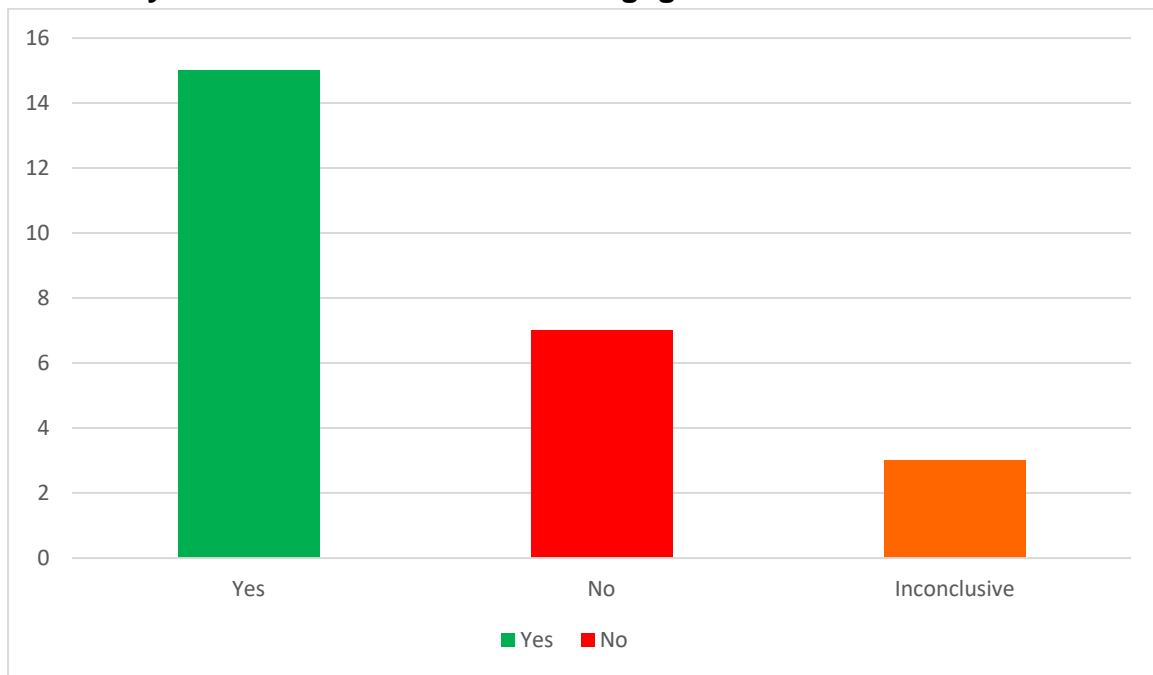


Figure 5.3: The need for the department to take measures to increase farmers’ interaction and engagement

Seven out of the 25 respondents (28%) answered negatively to this question. Out of the three that were inconclusive, two did not respond to the question at all and one indicated he is unsure. The rest answered positively. Some of the suggestions made by farmers for better engagement were as follows:

“There should be a platform on which government and farmers can engage with each other.”

Respondent 1

“Farmers don’t have time to read long emails and information brochures. Communication must be to the point and succinct.”

Respondent 4

“Take responsibility for creating an environment in which growth can take place. Ensure enough accessible training facilities for farm workers.”

Respondent 6

“Be more visible”

Respondent 9

“The department’s interactions is aimed at upcoming farmers. The department should make black commercial farmers part of white commercial farmers.”

Respondent 13

“Get involved with commercial farmers on ground level.”

Respondent 14

“Notification and information of all the relevant functions of the department, so that there can be interaction.”

Respondent 15

“Conduct more farm visits and show interest.”

Respondent 17

“Earn trust by getting to know people and their circumstances. Employ knowledgeable people who can do surveys correct, quickly and well.”

Respondent 18

“Keep farmers informed of all happenings at the department.”

Respondent 20

“Closer collaboration with organised agriculture and be present at their meetings.”

Respondent 5, Respondent 18 and Respondent 21

“Be commercial-farmer friendly again and put officials that can speak the language of the area in positions. Determine what the need of farmers are in specific areas and give attention to it.”

Respondent 22

“Form think scrums and give feedback on the results of inputs.”

Respondent 25

Question 5.4: Would the department need to take measures to improve your perception of it?

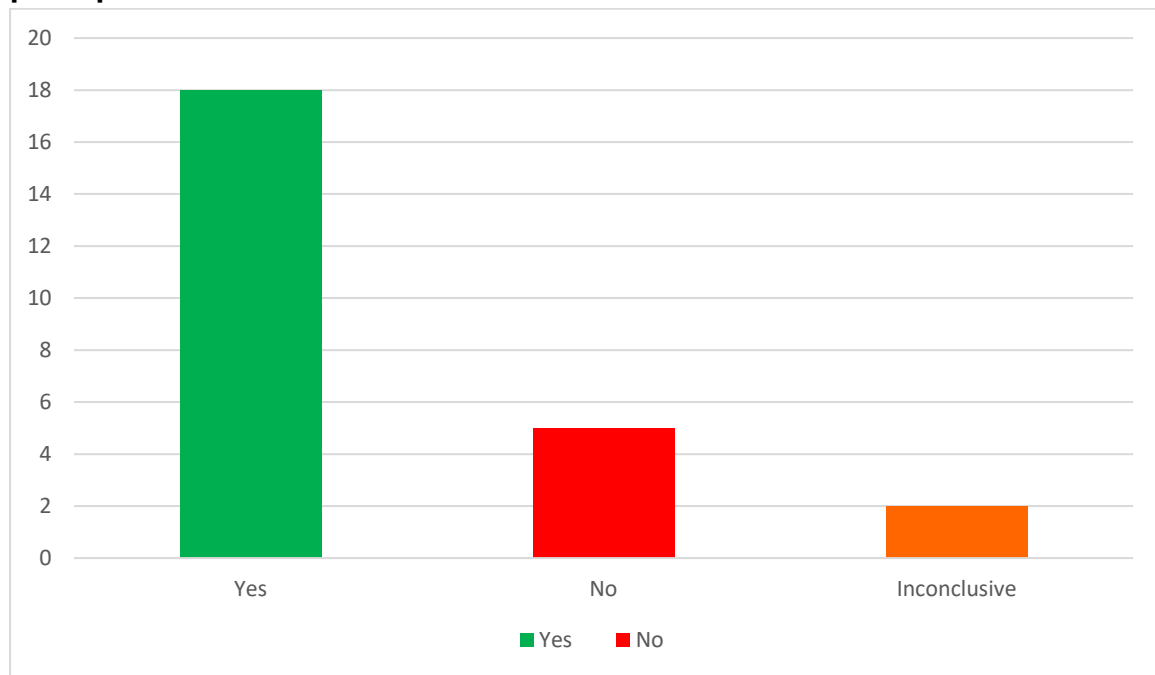


Figure 5.4: The need for the department to take measures to increase farmers' interaction and engagement

Of the 25 respondents, 18 (72%) answered yes, 5 (20%) answered no. Those farmers indicated they already have a good perception of the department and therefore the department does not need to take any measures to improve their perception of it and 2 (8%) said they were unsure or did not answer the question at all. The comments of those respondents who answered yes, were the following:

"The department should lift its standards of what it means to be successful. Also it must be shared that farming extends the 08:00 – 17:00 mind-set."

Respondent 1

"It must strive to be the most efficient department in the government – dedicated and committed leadership coupled with trained and knowledgeable employees who execute their duties with utmost efficiency."

Respondent 4

"Get involved positively with commercial farming and not just with assistance to land reform beneficiaries."

Respondent 5

"Take responsibility for creating an environment in which growth can take place. Ensure enough accessible training facilities for farm workers."

Respondent 6

“Communicate more with regards to the department’s efforts assistance to young and upcoming farmers.”

Respondent 7

“Officials, forget about your titles and help your farmers, because they need it.”

Respondent 9

“Advisory services to upcoming farmers will have to improve very much to make all the time and effort commercial farmers provide to them worth it, otherwise they are not going to make it over the long run at all.”

Respondent 11

“Give more acknowledgement to black commercial farmers.”

Respondent 13

“Leave politics alone and focus on the improvement of commercial farmers, especially on a year-to-year basis. Each year is different and has its own challenges.”

Respondent 14

“Make names of persons in the department available – on a yearly basis – that can be contacted for queries.”

Respondent 15

“Reach out more to commercial farmers.”

Respondent 16

“Get more involved with farmers on ground level.”

Respondent 17

“Land reform must be driven with farmers. In certain areas there are enough potential new farmers, but a lot more has to be done to empower the farmers. Take the fear and threats away and then we can help each other much more.”

Respondent 18

“Give enough training to farmers.”

Respondent 20

“Prevent corruption, finalise land reform plan so that “expropriation without compensation” rumours can end and economy can stabilise, better service delivery.

Respondent 21

“Be commercial-farmer friendly again and put officials that can speak the language of the area in positions. Determine what the need of farmers are in specific areas and give attention to it.”

Respondent 22

“Communicate more.”

Respondent 23

“Stop judging people by the colour of their skin.”

Respondent 25

Question 5.5: Would you interact more with the department if your perception of it improves? Please provide a reason for your answer.

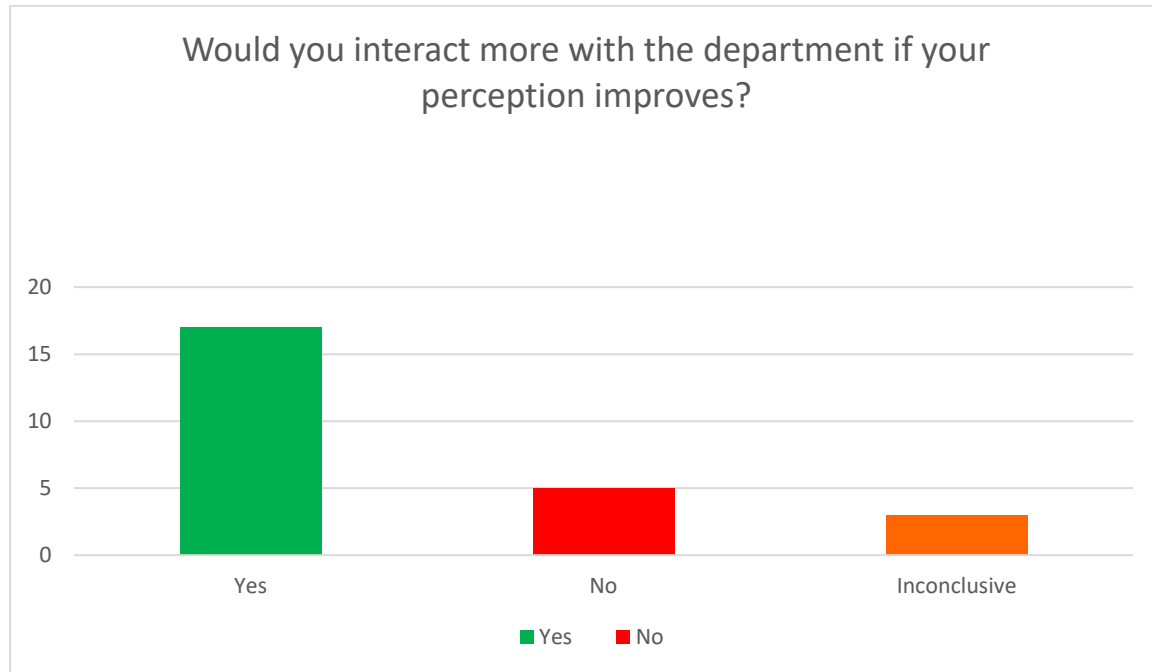


Figure 5.5: Interaction with the department if farmers' perception improves

Of the 25, 17 (68%) of the respondents reacted positively to this question. Of these, six of the respondents did not provide a reason for their answer. Three of these merely responded no, without elaborating, while two of them said that they would not because they already have good interaction with the department.

The respondents who motivated their “yes” answers said the following:

“Yes, if I thought, the government is an institution where your concerns can be heard and addressed for the betterment of all, I would have more interaction with the department.”

Respondent 1

“Yes, if the department starts driving agriculture and not politics.”

Respondent 5

“Yes, but the perception will only change if there is positive interaction.”

Respondent 6

“Yes, if I can see more concrete advantages from the department’s action, I will automatically have a more positive perception. My current perception is that the department works more in the background.”

Respondent 7

“Yes, interaction should come from both sides.”

Respondent 13

“Yes, if I have knowledge of the different functions of the department.”

Respondent 15

“Yes, together we can farm better.”

Respondent 16

“Yes, if I can talk in my own language.”

Respondent 17

“Yes, frequent interaction about the information I get.”

Respondent 20

“Yes, if the department can prove that a land reform action plan, which takes existing farmers into consideration is in place, farmers will get more involved to make land reform successful.”

Respondent 21

4.3 Comments

Are there any other comments you would like to add, with regards to the above mentioned questions?

Of the 25 farmers, 15 (60%) said they have no additional comments to add. Those that answered said:

“I have no personal problems with officials. With those that I have interaction, I have a good relationship.”

Respondent 22

“Agriculture without negative meddling from politicians make everyone winners.”

Respondent 18

“The Western Cape Department of Agriculture is managed well.”

Respondent 24

“Start introducing officials involved in the different districts and come out of your air conditioned offices for a change.”

Respondent 5

“My negative comments stem from the fact that agriculture (specifically that which I farm with – fruit - in general had to learn to function independently to such an extent that many farmers don’t even consider asking the department for help anymore.) Furthermore government officials, especially on national level sort of become the ‘enemy’. Without a doubt we play for the same team, but unfortunately the ‘team spirit’ will develop more positively with difficulty. The department can do it with better communication and I mean specifically personal visits and effective reaction to requests and pro-active actions, for instance in the case of water related issues.”

Respondent 6

“The department is invisible, but wants all the credit. Why don’t you come and visit the farmers yourself?!”

Respondent 9

“What worries me is that if the department were to disappear tomorrow, I don’t think commercial farmers will be worse off. The department has to decide how it can add value to ALL role players in the agricultural value chain! Our country needs a successful, sustainable commercial agricultural sector – never mind the demography of the farmers!”

Respondent 14

“Interaction and mutual trust between the department and the commercial farmer could be of great benefit to agricultural development. At present, development and education of our labour force is done by us. Assistance from the department would be of immense value.”

Respondent 15

“The department’s contribution to farmers can still improve a lot with regards to service delivery and support to farmers that is sustainable and can become bigger farmers.”

Respondent 20

4.4 Summary of findings

The information gathered from the questionnaires can be summarised as follows, per section.

Section 2: Awareness and use of departmental services

- Twenty eight percent of the respondents were under the impression that the main purpose of the department is to do research. Twenty percent of farmers thought that it is to provide advice and information. Development of farmers, implementation and monitoring of regulations and giving farmer support were perceived as being of similar importance (16%).

- **Many commercial farmers felt that the focus of the department is on rendering services to smallholder farmers.** Forty seven percent of them indicated that they felt the department only renders services to smallholder farmers and not to them. Although only a small percentage, the fact that 13% are of the opinion that the department renders services to no farmers at all, is concerning.
- **The two programmes (services) of the department farmers were most aware of were Structured Agricultural Education and Training (76%) and Veterinary Services (76%).** This could be explained by the fact that many commercial farmers studied at Elsenburg College and that veterinary services are an absolutely essential service, which most commercial farmers cannot do without.
- **It is concerning that a large percentage of farmers (36%) indicated that they did not make use of the department's services at all.** Therefore, they did not benefit from the (mostly) free services, which could have greatly enhanced their farming operations. Their motivation was that they were not aware of what was on offer – mostly due to poor communication, that they did not trust government institutions, that they felt the department is inaccessible, that agricultural advisors lack practical experience and that they therefore rather make use of the private sector. Among farmers who did make use of the department's services, Veterinary Services was the most utilised service, followed by Sustainable Resource Management and Farmer Support and Development.
- **The fact that 40% of the commercial farmers interviewed felt that the department did not contribute or add value to their farm at all was alarming.** Twelve percent were unsure whether the department contributed or added value to their farm at all. Of the farmers, 48% felt that the department did contribute/added value to the success of their farm.

Section 3: Interaction/engagement with the department

- **When asked about their interaction with the department in the 18 months prior to this survey only 60% indicated that they had had any interaction with the department recently.** Of these, the majority indicated it was

veterinary related (animal health, animal export documentation, vaccinations and abattoir visits). The rest interacted with the department around sustainable resource management (information on drought management and drought support and protection of natural resources.) These were consistent with the findings on the use of departmental services in section two and highlighted again the importance of these two services to commercial farmers. A few of the respondents interacted with the department through attendance of departmental events and/or exhibitions.

- **The research showed that the departmental radio programmes on RSG was the platform through which the department is engaged most efficiently with commercial farmers.** The second most frequent way in which the department interacted with farmers was through organised agriculture. (This would be Agri Western Cape, the association that most farmers in the Western Cape belong to and that represents their interests.) Senior departmental officials often visit their meetings and conferences to deliver speeches and interact with farmers. The third platform through which the department interacted most frequently with farmers was the departmental website. It is regarded as a good source of relevant and updated information. The next most efficient way of departmental engagement was perceived to be emails. Events and direct contact with senior managers were the next most preferred method of engagement. The departmental quarterly magazine (*Agriprobe*) and visits by departmental officials were perceived as not being very efficient as engagement platform between farmers and the department, with only telephonic engagement, brochures and talks/exhibitions being rated less efficient.
- **When asked if they think there is sufficient engagement from the side of the department with them, a large percentage (48%) answered negatively, while 16 percent said they were unsure.** Their motivation was that the department should communicate more with regards to the services they offer, reach out to them more, not treat them differently to emerging farmers and make more funding available to them. Some farmers also had a problem with the fact that the department's communication is mostly in English. The majority

of farmers, 80%, said they do respond when the department tries to communicate with them.

Section 4: Perceptions of department

- Participants were asked to rate their perception of the department, with 1 being very negative and 10 being very positive. **The largest percentage, 25%, gave the department a rating of 8 followed by a rating of 4, 5 and 6.** This finding seemed to indicate that there was a poor perception towards the department among commercial farmers. Some of the reasons given were lack of communication and engagement with farmers (this was clear from previous sections as well) and lack of interest in commercial farmers. Furthermore they felt that the department is not doing anything to improve the safety of farmers, that they should have done more to ensure the success of farmers and to add value to farming operations.
- **The majority of farmers (52%) indicated that there were no issues that affect their perception of the department.** Those who said that there were issues that affect their perception, indicated a lack of interest in commercial farmers, inadequate advisory services, lack of communication, inaccessibility, lack of market access support, land reform and lack of action on the side of the department to ensure land reform.
- **The majority of farmers (56%) indicated that the way in which certain issues are portrayed in the media e.g. drought and land expropriation without compensation, does not influence their perception of the department.** The rest (44%) motivated that the department was too quiet on these issues, appeared uninvolved/unknowledgeable about these issues and did not tell its side of the story.
- **When asked if their perception of the department influence their use of the department's services/level of interaction almost half (48%) answered positively.** The farmers indicated that they did not even make an effort because they had the perception that government departments are difficult to communicate with, they feel the department isn't interested in them anyway, are uninformed and inexperienced with regards to commercial farmers.

4.5 Proposed Services and Methods of Communication

- **Of the farmers taking part in the survey 68%, made suggestions for services currently not on offer by the department, which they need and would make use of.** The majority of the proposed services are already on offer. The problem is therefore not that the department did not provide the services needed, but that commercial farmers were not aware of it. Some frequently mentioned proposed services are the mandate of other departments. One could therefore deduce that farmers were not clear on which government departments were responsible for specific services.
- **The majority of farmers who took part in the survey 52%, indicated they prefer communication per email,** followed by face-to-face and telephonic communication. Very few farmers indicated other preferred methods of communication e.g. WhatsApp.
- **The majority of farmers (68%) indicated the department would need to take measures to increase their level of interaction and engagement with farmers.** When asked what actions the department would need to take, it was said that the department should show more interest in commercial farmers, be visible, communicate more about their services and happenings (preferably in their language of choice), create two-way engagement platforms, conduct more farm visits, ensure they have knowledgeable staff, know the needs of farmers and respond to it. They also suggested closer collaboration with organised agriculture.
- **The overwhelming majority of farmers (72%) also indicated that the department would need to take measures to improve their positive perception of the department.** The bulk of the suggestions centred around increasing involvement with commercial farmers as well as “leaving politics alone” and focussing more on the improvement of commercial farmers as opposed to black/emerging farmers. Other suggested measures were that the department should raise its standards, strive to be more efficient, create an environment in which growth can take place, increase its multilingualism, offer more training to farmers and farm workers, communicate more frequently with

commercial farmers and work with commercial farmers to assist upcoming farmers.

- **The overwhelming majority of farmers, 68%, also indicated they would interact more with the department if their perception of it improves.** They motivated that the department should start driving agriculture, not politics, positive interaction will lead to an improved perception, interaction should be two sided, the department and commercial farmers should work together, and that language is an issue, the department should communicate more and be more visible with regards to their actions.
- **The last question asked farmers to share general suggestions and comments.** Key comments were: Politics should be left out of agriculture and the department should add value to all role players in the agricultural sector, the department should be more visible on ground level, better communication is needed, especially personal visits and effective reactions to requests and pro-active action. It was also stated that interaction and mutual trust between the department and commercial farmers would be of great benefit to agricultural development and ensure a successful, sustainable agricultural sector. Lastly they felt that the department's service delivery still has much room for improvement and could help commercial farmers grow their farming enterprises.

4.6 Interviews with the Western Cape Department of Agriculture Regarding their Relationship, Focussing on Communication Channels, with Commercial Farmers

The following information was obtained from senior management members, responsible for communication and stakeholder relationship management in the department. (Respondent 1: Dr Dirk Troskie, Director: Business Planning and Strategy, Respondent 2: Ms Mary James: Head of Communication). It is reported verbatim to ensure the authenticity of the answers are maintained.

Question 1: Who, according to you, are the main stakeholder group/s served by the department?

Respondent 1: “Commercial farmers, smallholder farmers, household farmers, agri workers, young people/students, consumers. All these categories include both white and black farmers.”

Respondent 2: “All farmers – including commercial, smallholder and commodity groups.”

Question 2: Do you think that the department is doing enough from its side to engage/interact with commercial farmers? If not, what prevents the department from having more engagement with commercial farmers?

Respondent 1: “Yes, the services are available and we do have an office in most rural areas. However, we could still do more by engaging more efficiently by making use of social media.”

Respondent 2: “Yes and no. There is engagement, but I’m not entirely sure if the methods of communication are the best. The mode of communication has changed extensively from ten years ago and the majority of commercial farmers that you find in the province are still of the older age demographic, so that creates a huge gap, considering how we need to ensure that everyone is included. Everyone should be communicated to and no one should be left behind, with change and technology. For commercial farmers you still need to rely on tried and test (old) methods of communication while living in a new age of social media and technology. Financial and human capital constraints prevent the department from having more engagement with commercial farmers.”

Question 3. Do you think commercial farmers make use of the department’s services enough and if not, why not?

Respondent 1: “There are certain services which commercial farmers can (by law) only obtain from the department (e.g. export certification of animal products). However, there are other services (e.g. research results, engineering designs, etc.) which commercial farmers could make use of more.”

Respondent 2: “I don’t think commercial farmers are necessarily aware of all the services, to make use of it. With national (not provincial) government’s limitations,

farmers tend to rely more on commodity organisations and universities. They feel it's more reliable as it's led by farmers for farmers. They've had to adapt to a situation where not all the services are necessarily available from government."

Question 4. Is there a communication strategy and/or communication plans in place aimed specifically at commercial farmers?

Respondent 1: "No, not for commercial farmers specifically."

Respondent 2: "Not at the moment, no. I think that is something that needs attention."

Question 5. Which are the main channel of communication/methods of engagement utilised by the department in terms of commercial farmers and which do you think is the most effective?

Respondent 1: "Publications such as the *AgriProbe*, farmers' days, media (e.g. Radio RSG), etc. Radio probably reaches the biggest numbers, but personal engagements during farmers' days are probably the most effective in conveying detailed information."

Respondent 2: "Extension officers who visit the farmers as and when needed. Researchers provide information through farmers' days, popular articles and scientific articles in publications. Radio is also an important channel of communication utilised by the department in terms of commercial farmers."

Question 6. What are the barriers to communication between the department and commercial farmers?

Respondent 1: "Lack of trust. A number of farmers believe that the services of the department is only available to previously disadvantaged individuals."

Respondent 2: "Most of the communication is in English. Farmers are widely spread, so it's not always easy getting to all of them. Internet connections are also a problem"

in outlying areas. The question is also, how equipped are the farmers to consume all the digital info, considering the larger part of farmers are from the 'older' generation."

Question 7. How would you describe the current state of the relationship between the department and commercial farmers and how do you think the relationship can be improved?

Respondent 1: "See the previous question. The relationship can be improved through more personal communication."

Respondent 2: "It's moderate, not the best. Relationships can always be improved and that can only be done through consistent communication, focussing on a few key tailor made messages."

Question 8: What do you think is the current perception of commercial farmers towards the department and what influences these perceptions?

Respondent 1: "See above. Some farmers believe that the services of the department is only available to non-white people. Furthermore, there is a general perception that all civil servants are lazy and incompetent. The only way of addressing these perceptions is by personal engagement and proving the opposite."

Respondent 2: "Farmers in the Western Cape are a bit more comfortable with the department as a government entity, but not as trusting when it comes to the (national) Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Reform. They leverage a lot in the WCDoA for support and they haven't been disappointed. When necessary, for instance during the ongoing drought, we stepped in to support the sector, in terms of policy making, budget allocation for drought relief etc. I feel that the majority, although not all of them, do trust the department. It is important for the WCDoA to explore the latest needs of farmers and make these services available to farmers. We should look at how relevant we are in terms of farmers' needs, taking into account the political climate, in order to ensure that our services remain relevant. In essence, it's all about communicating with each other, we should make sure it done more efficiently and more regularly, so that no one is left behind."

The interviews with departmental officials revealed that the department does not currently have a communication strategy in place exclusively for commercial farmers and this shows clearly in the results of the research. Although the department does communicate with them through the platforms and strategies listed, these are not according to a communication strategy and communication plans.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, the findings of the research regarding the department's interaction with farmers, focussing on communication channels, were presented. The results were interpreted and summarised for easy reference. Then information provided by the WCDoA on their communication with the farmers was also presented. The research will be concluded in the following chapter. It will start off with an overview of the research questions and literature review, present the key findings, make recommendations based on the key findings and end off with a final conclusion.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study, which evaluated the relationship and stakeholder communication between the Western Cape Department of Agriculture and commercial farmers, primarily via the communication channels used. An overview of the research goals and objectives are provided along with conclusions of the research. Recommendations, based on the results of the research, are provided.

5.2 Overview of Research Questions and Objectives

The aim of this study was to evaluate the relationship between the Western Cape Department of Agriculture and commercial farmers and propose how effective, proven stakeholder relation strategies and models can be applied, if necessary. This was done by evaluating the department's current communication and relationship management channels for commercial farmers. The research questions and sub-questions, as well as the research objectives, are stipulated below:

- **Research question one:** What is the definition of stakeholder relationship management?
Research objective: To describe and explore proven, successful models of stakeholder communication and engagement.
- **Research question two:** What is the current state of communication and the relationship between the department and the stakeholder group under investigation and is it dialogic?
Research objective: To investigate the department's current communication and relationship management channels for commercial farmers and to determine how effective it is.
- **Research question three:** Can the models for effective stakeholder communication and relationship management be applied to improve communication and the relationship between the two entities?
Research objectives: To make recommendations to improve communication and relationships with commercial farmers and overcome negative perceptions and reputation problems between the department and commercial farmers, if necessary.

The research questions are answered in the sections below.

5.3 Overview of literature review

The first part of the literature review provides the answer to the first research question: What is the definition of stakeholder relationship management and what are best practices/strategies in this regard?

The stakeholder group under review, commercial farmers, are defined as farmers with an established enterprise, producing for the market to make a profit with an annual turnover of at least R5 million (Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 2018). They are one of the biggest and most important stakeholder groups served by the department, as they produce the majority of agricultural products (food) in the province. According to the linkages model by Grunig and Hunt (1984: 141) commercial farmers can be viewed as functional stakeholders (they use the department's output – services). Without them the agricultural sector (including upward and downward linkages) in the province would be very small as smallholder farmers produce a very small percentage of agricultural products. They are therefore of immense value to the department and province as a whole.

Steyn and Puth (2000) suggest that an understanding of each stakeholder group is necessary, which would include their expectations, values, thoughts and feelings. Secondly, strategic issues that affect them should be identified and thirdly a strategy should be drawn up to deal with each group, clearly stating the communication objectives for the group, the messages to be communicated and the communication channels/platforms which will be utilised to achieve the objectives. Two way communication is important and there should be continuous relationship building and collaboration. Forums can be created where expectations are shared (Steyn and Puth, 2000).

Wheeler and Sillanpää (1998) emphasise the need for regular conversations and focus groups. Hon and Grunig (1999) suggest access to publics, openness and joint problem solving. McKee and Lamb (2009) talk about understanding the concerns, needs, communication patterns and continuous research, planning and evaluation of stakeholder groups. Jeffery (2009) highlights the importance of building trust,

consulting with stakeholders through workshops, personal conversations, focus groups, public meetings and more.

Other findings from the literature review are the following:

Previous research showed that few commercial farmers currently make use of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture's services and that there is negativity among commercial farmers (Troskie, 2017). The survey conducted by Tolken (2017) shows the same under-utilisation of services as well as inadequate communication employed by the department. An earlier study done by Louw (2014) also showed under-usage of services and hinted at a misperception among this group about the services on offer and who the department renders services to.

According to the literature, government communicators have to navigate various challenges, which leads to a general dissatisfaction (among members of the public) with government communication (Ramodibe, 2014). Ramodibe (2014) lists some of the challenges as limited resources, a lack of co-ordination of messages, leading to impromptu campaigns, a negative perception of government departments to begin with, "red tape", over use of English and a lack of face-to-face communication. Another challenge, mentioned by Haarhoff (2019), is that government communicators have to deal with a large variety of stakeholder groups and have to balance their (often conflicting) interests.

Stakeholder discontent with government communication is not confined to South Africa. According to Roling and Wagemakers (1998) many Dutch farmers are dissatisfied with their government. They ask for more two-way communication and wish for more direct contact between themselves and government. They also complain about a lack of visibility. Farmers in the UK feel there is physical and social distance between themselves and government and feel that their government should work harder to build relationships with them.

Likewise, Palmer, Fozdar and Sully (2009) report that Australian farmers lament the inaccessibility, poor communication, lack of transparency and bureaucracy of their Department of Agriculture. They distrust the department and government as a whole and seek more personal contact with departmental officials. Farmers in Nigeria are

also unhappy with the lack of timely, up-to-date information they feel they receive from their Department of Agriculture (Obidike, 2011).

5.4 Key findings

This answers the second research question: What is the current state of the relationship, in terms of communication, between the department and commercial farmers?

A summary of the key findings are provided below:

5.4.1 Interviews with Commercial Farmers

5.4.1.1 Current services, Communication and Engagement

Commercial farmers feel that politics play a role in the department's service delivery and that the department is mostly concerned with black, emerging farmers. Many of them do not make use of the department's services at all. Some commercial farmers are unclear about the mandates of the various departments and hold the department responsible for services e.g. land reform - which is in fact the mandate of the (national) Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Reform (DARDLR).

Commercial farmers believe that there is inadequate communication from the department, especially with regards to the services on offer. They are under the impression that the department is not interested in them, does not care about their needs and does not engage with them enough. These farmers feel that the department should be more visible and view personal visits and face-to-face interaction as important. Commercial farmers feel that the department does not always communicate with them in their language of choice. Many of the farmers interviewed have had no interaction with the department in the 18 months prior to answering the questionnaire.

All of the above points to the fact that two-way communication and dialogue between the department and commercial farmers are lacking. The current engagement between the department and commercial farmers are inadequate. The department does not consult, listen to and communicate with stakeholders enough. There is no negotiated exchange of ideas and opinions, in other words the communication between the two parties is not dialogic. As stated under "theoretical framework" the two way symmetrical model would be the ideal model for the relationship between the department and commercial farmers as it would encourage negotiation and foster

mutual understanding between the two parties. It promotes mutual benefit, understanding and respect. However, it is clear that the current model of engagement between the two parties is far from being the Two-way Symmetrical Model.

Commercial farmers do not have a good perception of the department in general. They indicated that their perception of the department influences their use of the department's services and the extent to which they interact with the department. Commercial farmers indicated they would interact more with the department if their perception of it improves.

5.4.1.2 Proposed/preferred services, Communication and Engagement

Commercial farmers prefer communication per email, followed by face-to-face and telephonic communication. Commercial farmers feel the department should take measures to increase their level of interaction and engagement with them. This group of farmers feel the department must take measures to increase their perception of it. Radio is indicated as an important platform through which to communicate with them.

5.4.1.3 Interviews with senior officials of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture

The key points from the interviews with the most senior departmental officials, responsible for stakeholder communication and engagement, are described below.

The department is of the opinion that there is communication with commercial farmers, but admits that more can be done to engage with them. The communication channels need to be reviewed. Although social media is an important communication platform in this day and age, it should be considered that most commercial farmers fall in the older age group and therefore still prefer older methods of communication, such as hard copies of agricultural publications.

The department further admits that farmers do not utilise departmental services optimally. It could be ascribed to the fact that they are simply not aware of all the services on offer.

When asked about the main channels of communication currently utilised by the department, they referred to departmental publications, articles in popular

publications, radio and personal engagement such as interaction with extension officers during farm visits and departmental officials during farmer information days.

Barriers to communication with commercial farmers are described as a lack of trust on the part of farmers, a misconception on their part that the department are more concerned about smallholder farmers, the overuse of English as a language of communication, the fact that not all farmers are equipped or willing to consume digital communication and communication via social media platforms.

They concede that there is room for improvement in the relationship with commercial farmers and that personal communication and more consistent, strategic communication is of the essence.

The department is aware that commercial farmers do not currently have a good perception of it and that commercial farmers feel the department has a stronger focus on farmers from previously disadvantaged groups. The farmers' perception of the department can be improved if the department ensures its services remain relevant and that communication with commercial farmers are stepped up.

5.5 Summary

It is clear from the above that farmers feel the current state of communication and engagement leaves much to be desired. There is not sufficient communication with them, they do not know about all the services on offer, they feel the department is not interested in them, that it cares more about other stakeholder groups, is driven by politics and not their best interests, does not engage with them enough – especially one-on-one, is invisible and does not care about their needs. They generally appear to have a negative perception of the department.

The department acknowledges shortcomings in the current relationship and communication with commercial farmers and that more needs to be done to engage this group. Although it seems they are not aware of how strongly some commercial farmers feel about the topic and the extent to which they dislike the department.

The engagement patterns deducted and concerns voiced indicate the reasons for the under-utilisation of the department's services. These findings are consistent with that of the literature review and correspond with the way farmers from other countries feel

about specific government departments in their respective countries. The majority of these farmers also view government departments in a negative light.

It is also clear that the communication model currently being used by the department is not the Two-way Symmetrical Model as there is not sufficient dialogue (two-way communication.) At present, it is not even the Information Model, often employed by government departments, as farmers are not getting enough information from the department and does not seem to be aware of the services it offers/activities at the department.

5.6 Recommendations

The following recommendations are presented in order to answer the third research question: Can the models for effective stakeholder communication and relationship management be applied to improve communication and the relationship between the two entities?

According to Steyn and Puth (2000) a strategy should be in place for each stakeholder group. Hon and Grunig (1999) agree that communication programmes should be posited to develop and maintain effective long-term relationships between management and publics.

Steyn and Puth (2000) state that the first step in stakeholder management is to identify and understand each stakeholder group – their values, key issues, expectations etc. as well as the nature and size of their stake. The recommendations below illustrate how the models for effective stakeholder communication and relationship management can be applied to improve communication and the relationship between the Western Cape Department of Agriculture and commercial farmers. It is based on the key findings of the research:

As a starting point, more research should be conducted among commercial farmers to gain a thorough understanding of their needs and values as well as their expectations of the department.

It is highly recommended that the department develops a communication plan exclusively for commercial farmers, taking into account their needs and expectations and the strategic issues that affect them. Such a plan would include clarifying the objectives, communication platforms, tactics and messages. There should also be

evaluation methods and a budget attached to it. (See Addendum A for a draft communication plan, which could be expanded as more information become available and the needs of farmers change over time.)

Certain operational changes are also recommended to improve the relationship with the farmers as well as the farmers' perception of the department: Trust among commercial farmers can be re-established by ensuring officials are available to assist them just as much as they are available to smallholder farmers. The department should also make certain that senior, knowledgeable extension officers (agricultural advisors) liaise with farmers. These officials must also be able to speak Afrikaans. This will ensure less frustration among farmers. (There is a considerable difference between the level of knowledge and experience of extension officers who are capable of giving advice to commercial farmers as opposed to smallholder farmers - who require more basic knowledge.)

5.7 Conclusion

The research points to shortcomings in the current relationship between the department and commercial farmers by way of communication. As highlighted in the study, commercial farming makes a huge contribution to ensuring people have food on their tables. The situation can be improved if the recommendations are considered and adapted for implementation. This can lead to better co-operation and the increased use of the department's services, which may benefit both parties and lead to stronger, more prosperous commercial farmers who are able to cope better with the multitude of challenges they face. Ultimately it can boost food production and security in the province, country and even globally.

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Addendum A: Communication Plan for Commercial Farmers

Communication objectives	Target Audience	Messages	Communication Platforms
Increase awareness of departmental services by at least 50% in the next two years.	Commercial farmers	Departmental services to be listed and/or explained and use of the services encouraged.	More radio programmes as well as infomercials on radio stations, such as RSG.
		Emphasise the department's appreciation of and commitment to supporting commercial Farmers.	Personalised emails to farmers.
			One-on-one communication with farmers through farm visits and attendance of existing platforms such as agricultural shows/exhibitions.
			An annual symposium exclusively for commercial farmers.
			Social media platforms utilised by farmers, such as Facebook.
			Increased use of existing platforms e.g. stronger partnerships with organised agriculture and commodity organisations. Their communication vehicles can be utilised e.g. ensure a stronger presence at their meetings/conferences and one-on-one sessions with farmers. Also attend more of the smaller, local farmer association meetings.

Notes to Addendum A

General points to keep in mind when communicating

- ✓ Where possible, include a section in the communication explaining the department's involvement in important issues such as land reform and water rights. Make it clear that the department is not responsible for land reform or land allocations, it merely assists black farmers who are land reform beneficiaries. Nor is it responsible for issuing water rights/permits or farm worker housing.
- ✓ When doing talks to commercial farmers, emphasise that the department is aware of them and the important role they play, although it is not always able to interact with each of them personally, and acknowledge and appreciate their huge contribution to agriculture in the Western Cape and their enormous role in ensuring food availability, sustainability, job creation and economic growth.
- ✓ Information given should be short and to the point. Farmers are busy people and do not have the time and patience to read long pieces of information.
- ✓ The majority of communication should be in Afrikaans. The majority of farmers are Afrikaans speaking and the need for communication to be in Afrikaans was strongly expressed by the farmers interviewed.
- ✓ Contact details of officials should be provided when communicating so that farmers know exactly who to contact should they need information/advice.
- ✓ Communication platforms should provide for two way communication to take place e.g. an opportunity for farmers to voice their concerns/give their feedback at meetings.
- ✓ Ensure senior officials and the Minister of Agriculture are available to commercial farmers. For example, ensure they are present at the main agricultural shows/exhibitions on a rotational basis and that there is a private space where they can talk to commercial farmers with burning questions/issues, which they wish to discuss.

Notes pertaining to communication platforms

- Host an annual conference/symposium for commercial farmers only. This will go a long way in making them feel that they are important to the department and that it is taking the time and effort to focus on them exclusively, address issues and convey information relevant to them, and create an opportunity for

discussions and input. It will also provide a platform for farmers to engage with one another, a need they have also expressed.

- Increase the use of social media to connect with commercial farmers. This can be a very valuable tool to relay information to farmers and encourage two-way dialogue.
- Making use of existing channels are of the essence, due to a limited budget (which gets reduced every year) and not enough staff members to visit each commercial farmer's farm. This is a cost effective and efficient way to increase interaction with commercial farmers. Organised agriculture refers to farmers associations such as Agri SA, Agri Western Cape and the African Farmers Association of South Africa (AFASA). Ensure information provided and requests for input via the commodity organisations reach commercial farmers. A large part of interaction with commercial farmers take place through the commodity organisations (e.g. Hortgro, Vinpro, the Red Meat Producers Organisation, Milk Producers Organisation etc.) Yet no one mentioned the commodity organisations they belong to. These organisations should ensure they disseminate the information they receive to all their members and farmers' feedback reaches the department.

Addendum B: Questionnaire to commercial farmers



Questionnaire to commercial farmers on communication, engagement and perceptions

1.1 How old are you?

1.2 Which commodity do you farm with?

1.3 How long have you been farming?

1.4 How big is your farm?

2.1 What, according to you, is the main purpose of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture and who does it render services to?

2.2 Which of the following services of the department are you aware of? (Please tick all the appropriate ones.)

Agricultural Economics (Macro economics, statistics, agribusiness and marketing etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Structured Agricultural Education and Training (Higher education and training, bursaries, short courses etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Capital Development Initiatives (bursaries, internships etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Research and Technology Development Services (Plant production, animal production etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Farmer Support and Development (Farmer settlement and support, land reform, agricultural advisory services etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural Development (Rural development, farm worker development etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sustainable Resource Management (Engineering Services, Disaster Risk Management, LandCare, Land Use Management etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Veterinary Services (Animal health, vet laboratories, export control etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.2 Are there any other services, not listed, which you were under the impression the department is responsible for?

2.3 Do you make use of the department's services? (If yes, please list which ones. If not, please explain in detail why not.)

2.4 In your view, is the department contributing in any way to the success of your farm/adding value to your farm? Please explain the reason for your answer.

3.1 Describe all interaction you've had with the department in the past 18 months, if any.

3.2 Through which platforms are the department currently engaging with you? (Please tick all appropriate ones.)

Quarterly magazine (Agriprobe)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Telephonically	<input type="checkbox"/>
Departmental brochures and flyers	<input type="checkbox"/>	Farmer Information Days and demonstrations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Website (www.elsenburg.com)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Departmental Events (Agri Worker of the Year, Female Entrepreneur in Agriculture gala event, ConnectAgri exhibitions etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emails	<input type="checkbox"/>	Talks/exhibitions at events at which the department is a sponsor (e.g. Western Cape Agri conference)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Departmental advertisements, press releases and editorials in the media	<input type="checkbox"/>	Visits from departmental officials (e.g agricultural advisors)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Direct contact with senior management	<input type="checkbox"/>	Through organised agriculture (e.g. Agri Western Cape, AFASA etc.) and/or representative bodies (e.g. MilkSA)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Radio programmes (RSG Landbou and Die Kwik Styg)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

3.3 Do you feel that there is sufficient engagement from the side of the department with you, as a commercial farmer? Please motivate your answer.

3.4 Do you respond when the department attempts to communicate and engage with you? If not, why?

3.5 Which methods of engagement would you prefer? (Please be very specific.)

3.6 What actions would the department need to take/platforms would it need to implement to increase your level of interaction and engagement with the organisation?

4.1 On a scale of 1 – 10 with 1 being very negative and 10 being very positive, how do you currently view/perceive the department?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please explain the reason for your answer.

4.2 Are there any issues that affect your perception of the department?

4.3 Does the media and the way certain issues are portrayed (such as farm murders, drought and expropriation without compensation) affect your perception of the department? Please explain.

4.4 Does your perception of the department influence your use of its services and level of interaction? Motivate your answer.

4.5 What actions would the department need to take to improve your perception of it?

4.6 Any other comments you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your participation.