



## The Fifth African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Biennial Conference 2016

### FARMNET Stakeholder Workshop – A facilitated dialogue to inform the development of enhanced forms of smallholder market networks structures

#### Concept Note

##### Background

FARMNET is a WesBank funded project housed by Stellenbosch University and led by the Southern African Food Lab project which forms part of the University.

##### Purpose of the Side Event

The overarching aim of FARMNET will be to analyse the various forms of farmer cooperation through the formation of networks, groupings and associations, and to propose and test enhanced farmer network structures that can be adopted by smallholder farmers to facilitate market access.

FARMNET will focus on smallholder farmers who are currently seeking to transform from subsistence to engaging with the market. These smallholder farmers who currently support the food security of the most vulnerable populations both in rural and urban areas are a key focus of the South African National Development Plan and should be supported to establish sustainable market relationships.

##### Motivation

In South Africa agriculture has always been a smaller part of the economy because of the relatively large mining sector. The legacy of agricultural policy in South Africa (segregation, suppression and support) has led to a distorted countryside with constrained economic development, skewed in favour of greater capital intensity (Vink and McLachlan, 2012).

Agriculture contributes a larger share of economic activity in many rural areas of the country compared to urban areas, especially (but not exclusively) in the former homeland areas where poverty and the concomitant food insecurity is concentrated (Vink and McLachlan, 2012). FARMNET is working to engage with the current system reviewing or collating reviews to better understand where potential for transformative

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processes lie. Thus FARMNET is initially working on a systematic review of policies, practices and results of previous systems in order to feed into a think tank and the process of design. The process which will be central to the workshop at the RUFORUM October 2016 Biennial conference will engage with small scale, existing farmer networks as well as government agricultural extension officers and the food security task team for three provinces.

FARMNET will be working in line with The National Development Plan (NDP) 2013. The NDP provides an innovative framework to begin to inform action, required across society, to deal with pervasive hunger. The NDP makes several arguments that resonate with international literature in its appraisal of what it will take to eradicate food insecurity. Proposed interventions require **engaging the entire food system**, as well as addressing linkages with the education and health systems. To address food insecurity **the NDP calls for collaboration between government, the private sector, civil society and citizens to establish “self-sustainable” local food systems** that would underpin universal access and utilisation over time. Such an approach is envisaged to reduce hunger and poverty, increase agricultural development and address malnutrition, which will in turn contribute towards skills development and improve inclusive economic growth and job creation.

### Approach and Methodology

The FARMNET Stakeholder Workshop will be building on the initial project work and asking participants for inputs into the concept/design. The initial project work has seen the development of a smallholder farmer network data base, a systematic literature review of network structures that have facilitated smallholder market access, and the completion of a number of stakeholder interviews and farmer case studies all of which have worked towards gaining an informed understanding of how farmers currently engage with the system. At the workshop the findings will be presented and there will be dialogue around this to inform the development of a enhance farmer network concept.

The Stakeholder Workshop will take the form of a facilitated participatory dialogue process following short presentations of findings with a view to

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gaining insight and clarity on the proposed concept of FARMNET. In addition, there will be an Exhibition booth to profile activities of FARMNET.

**Expected outcomes**

1. Building support for the FARMNET process in South Africa which has begun;
2. Critical assessment and input from participants to the pilot concept which will be presented.
3. Increased visibility of FARMNET

**Venue and Participants**

**Venue:** Century City Conference Centre, Meeting Room 11

**Date & Time:** Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2016 from 1115-1730

12 FARMNET core group members

25 South African delegates, from farmer cooperatives, universities

We invite outside Stakeholders to this event who are not attending RUFORUM Biennial, as well as RUFORUM Biennial participants.

**Side Event Organizers and Contact**

FARMNET

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**Draft programme,**

Chair: Dr Scott Drimie, Director of Southern Africa Food Lab

**MORNING**

Presenting the concept of FARMNET

Prof Ben Cousins –the South African smallholder farmer landscape

Data base and systematic literature review – presentation

Dialogue interviews and farmer case studies - presentation

**LUNCH**

**AFTERNOON**

Draft concept to pilot – presentation

Break into smaller groups for discussion

Facilitated stakeholder discussion on the pilot concept

Close at 16:30

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