

Local marketing and food system process review:

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1. What was supposed to happen?

- With this project, farmers will have more produce and do not know what to do with that so they need more customers
- Farmers selling produce
- Check whether there are clients for MDF farmers, reliability of customer base, and local markets
- To assess the relationship between supply and demand in the area –farmers are assuming that if it is not the formal economy, it is not worth the time and effort, so we are making small steps to see whether we can meet local demand before going to bigger markets
- Improve awareness of local farmers selling their produce at local markets and generating income locally – multi-stakeholder process – awareness includes people from the community, AFRA, extension officers, local municipality
- Farmers are selling at pensions points (PPs). Some of the village- based pension points are small, so income potential is not that high. Many people go to the town pension points instead.
- Try and include youth to take on the marketing and logistics of gathering produce and selling
- Include the missing middle (those participants between 45-65years who have little to no access to social grants).
- Improving local food diversity and nutrition – there is good quality food in your community
- Covid response – last year people could not move around so this was an effort to sell close to homes.

In summary: Creating markets for farmers to sell their excess produce to improve their livelihoods, demonstrating to them that it is possible to bulk sell, generate broad awareness of this (including with the community so they come and buy), get youth and missing middle involved, improve local food diversity.

2. What actually did happen?

- In initial stages, there was some reluctance because of previous experiences – marketing had not worked previously – It was hard to get farmers to respond enthusiastically.
- Farmers also limited themselves initially in terms of what they were producing, thinking there were no markets. E.g. on our market day broccoli, cauliflower and spinach sold out very quickly and they had to go and fetch extra. Now they want to plant more.

Bergville:

- In Bergville we went to the market with 3 bakkie loads and returned only 1 bakkie load of produce. It means around 60-70% of produce is sold at each market, which is great.

- Preparation – met in villages, brought youth to see how we operate our marketing – mentioned we wanted youth to go around villages to see who has what and buy it. Some youth came and they saw what happened on the day – they are interested and now they want their own gardens.
- Leading up – had lists of who was bringing what, some pulled out closer to the time. Youth going was an idea – not yet. Before the market, called meetings with all farmers and they said what they have. Pumpkin, maize and all non-perishables brought to the agreed upon central point the day before. On the day, collect from there and now include the perishable veg, meat, eggs etc. to ensure veg was freshly picked. Some driving around to pick up the fresh produce. Each farmer chooses their own prices for their produce. MDF staff do the admin, nametags with name and price on each piece, this goes into a central container the moment the item is bought and at the end of the day all tags are counted, to work out earnings for each farmer. This is linked to the produce list. In this way farmers know and receive what they have earned on the spot and also have their unsold produce returned to them. For each village, one person is chosen who looks after earnings and produce for those who did not attend on the day. Farmer volunteers came on day (five or six) – more or less one from each village – and they arranged that they are responsible for whose money they will deliver and return unsold produce.
- Four villages working with – people can see how they can make money. Farmers are learning too – in Berg, they are planning
- Thus far, the process has worked well.

Midlands:

- Marketing meeting with the farmers, got a list of what all farmers had available, packaging, cash boxes, name tags needed for the day, had a pricing discussion as farmers have different prices – have to sell 12 maize or a dozen eggs for one standard price. So, in Midlands agreed upon prices were set for the different products. Looked at most common price and fairness of this price. Day before, according to list, we collected non-perishable produce. When we arrived at the house, we labelled the produce right then. Fresh produce on the day and labelled.
- At the market, had a book where we wrote all sales with each farmer's name. Adding and counting was done and money distributed on the day
- Counting the money was difficult – some over and some under
- Expected to make R2,500-R3,00 and made over R8,000
- Got a spot that was not in the busiest part of town (Midlands), afraid that people would not come because it was not where the payout was – underestimated the logistics, people started buying before set up was over. Visible from main road – people did come
- Marketing through posters, pamphlets for farmers to distribute, and social media – turn out very successful. Loud hailer did not come
- Social media – people could order and buy – about 20% of the income in this way. MDF is Ubering the veg and delivering in PMB
- Created a pot of knowledge – called in different stakeholders who became part of it – local municipalities following what is happening
- Youth from AFRA helped with the logistics on the day. They were enthused, seeing the farmers making money

Learning:

- We learned that there definitely is a market and potential for growth in the area.
- Selling together works for farmer, it offers an opportunity to have a diverse range of products – customers can buy all their groceries at one point. The variety of produce was a good selling point.

- Another good selling point is the visual presentation of the stalls; with the tables, gazebos, banners and well-presented produce.
- We and they are encouraged and now want to plan better. Farmers are now starting to have production plans.
- We were surprised how popular pork meat was, as well as chicken portions and frozen meat. In Bergville, farmers are now coordinating who will slaughter for each market day.

In summary: Systems in place for preparation, for how it worked on the day, it was really successful and everyone has learned. Farmers are encouraged and we learned that there is a market. Despite not having a great spot, customers came. Marketing (social media, posters, pamphlets) was thought to work. Delivery of veg in PMB by MDF staff is a problem – too labour intensive.

3. What would you do the same

- Participatory manner of the market - first meeting in prep – get v reliable data about what is available and make decisions about whether the market is on or not. MDF teamwork and post mortems
- Keep accurate records of what farmers bring, write down and label each item as it is brought
- Have one central collection point rather than MDF going to each homestead
- We would do it again so that we begin to build a good reputation for quality and affordability of the produce
- Marketing strategy – use more social media platforms, already have a page on FB. Have more posters and pamphlets. Digital posters really worked, did increase the sale for Midlands compared to Bergville where there is less access social media
- Midlands – villages are far, using Bamshela as central point was good
- Labels for fresh produce
- Branding – set up and banners – made people curious
- Counting and dividing money on the day
- Involving farmers in counting – transparency
- Farmers need the money on the day so they can buy more seedlings and other inputs and it can build trust
- AFRA youth helped us – they asked to be invited again
- Planning meetings are important. It is good that farmers confirm what they have themselves and together. Teamwork in MDF is also important as the process is logistics heavy. Also do mini-reviews to improve on each round. As an example, in Bergville broilers were initially put in a tub and were wet and dirty. Then a small cage was constructed and just this change in presentation increased sales of live broilers substantially.
- How the marketing day was an opportunity for farmers to network and buy each other's produce and support each other, learning about new stuff, eg herbs
- Cooked food available
- Continue on pension day? Yes, because money is available. If people grow more, need to consider where else but for now, that is fine
- Southern KZN – Pension days are good as there is expendable cash. In SKZN however these are not really village based- so we would need to go to the larger centres- such as Ixopo, Highflats etc.

- Midlands – Bamshela – want to do a trial run to see if it possible to do a market day round 15th when nurses and teachers get paid. Competition around here is steep. Wanted to try the local hospital but a lot of vendors already there. Also thought of home or area deliveries during lockdown
- Bergville – can we also do it more often than once a month. Difficulty is balancing the time for logistics, someone who focuses specifically on this. Produce is there.
- Use of environmentally friendly packaging, no plastic or as little as possible.

In summary: Good preparation and labelling is essential, and farmers need to be involved and do the counting. Do it on pension days again. Consider whether to do it more often, given the costs involved. There is produce that needs to be sold.

4. What would do differently?

- During planning we ruled out certain foods for the market, included madumbis, sweet potatoes, beans. Try not to base everything on our assumptions, as we thought only 5kg of these but sold much more. Ideas about supply and demand – assumptions did not play out on the day
- Pre-set up way of recording what farmers bring and how sales – tags that get pulled off the produce instead of everything written in the book .
- Midlands – in terms of counting and records – had one person doing that, need at least two, one writing, one collecting
- Have a line of people – they were all talking at once and the writer missed some things
- On the day, found weavils in the beans, and a farmer had cut out part of a cauliflower that was rotting – need quality checks for food that is brought in the morning so that farmers do not get a bad reputation
- Bought brown paper bags with stickers for branding, close to town people want things a bit more shiny than in rural areas
- Ask customers what they want
- Social media and deliveries – offer delivery central collection point in PMB or pay – get Mr Delivery to do this or the customer Ubers it
- Costs MDF a lot– three people, three days, transport. Not sustainable in the long-term. It is an investment – in Berg, farmers are getting keen and maybe in future, they will do it themselves. Farmers are doing a lot of work themselves
- In Bergville there is one young person with transport – Thalethe Khumalo, who is now keen and also producing. This is a good opportunity to make the transport arrangements more local.
- Resist the temptation to pick up all the cabbages for each person, it needs to be sustainable
- Mahlathini Marketing Wing – conceptualise it better with systems and measure progress
- Continuity and planning and production
- Proved that local marketing is a lot more possible than we thought
- Keep an eye on the experimentation so that MDF works out how to do the marketing and then hand it over to farmers and youth. The problem will be transport. Need creative ideas on this. MJ: Mr Delivery bikes and drivers? Too small.
- Ozwathini – farmers interested in value-adding like sauces and jams. Also branding for that

In summary: Get prep and market day systems more set up and streamlined. Do the branding. It might need a dedicated marketing wing that takes over all this work, which is to understand what it takes to bulk sell and then hand it over to farmers to some degree.

Southern KZN and Matat

SKZN have worked with learning groups and there is potential for the produce. Selling is word of mouth only, no farmers doing bulk selling, have not had the time to get that going. Areas are far apart, so putting villages together for this is difficult. Look at using Ixopo. Can work with the LED section of the Ubuhlebezwe Municipality for transport and support (Nqobile and Mr Mkhize- the manager). Madzikane is in Creighton – far from Ixopo and under another LM – NDZ. Will need to explore options there- none are presently available.

Some participants are socially and politically involved and dominate the groups -they want huge markets and do not want to stand at a table. Ambition outweighs their production. Area dominated by one farmer and no-one else gets much.

Matatiele –not much was possible at a village level but need to investigate. Pension day is very busy in the town – queues in every shop. This is more sheep and wool than veggies. No low hanging fruit here. Explore Meat Naturally options – auctions. Small abattoirs for poultry to sell frozen chicken and pieces. Erna: Try this type of marketing there (village based stalls) before we say it will not work there. And at village level – people will save money from going into Matat. Opportunities for marketing have been cornered by people who are not our farmers – many undercurrents going on. Matat – haves and have nots are really divided, really poor people who live really far from Matat. Village by village and have a marketing discussion, make our decisions from that. In Nkai for example there is a local supermarket, that can be a selling point and where pension days are held.

Aim

Working together with smallholder farmers to create local marketing opportunities and processes for farmers to sell their excess produce to improve their livelihoods and to generate broad awareness of this (including with the community so they come and buy), get youth and missing middle involved, improve local food diversity.

Actions to date

Systems in place for preparation and for how it works on the day – local market stalls at strategic pension pay out points that are village based, or small local towns and centres. It was really successful and everyone has learned. Farmers are encouraged and we learned that there is a market. Marketing (social media, posters, pamphlets) was thought to work. Delivery of veg in PMB by MDF staff is a problem – too labour intensive.

Continuation

Good preparation and labelling is essential, and farmers need to be involved in all aspects, including the counting of money. Do it on pension days again. Consider whether to do it more often, given the costs and logistics involved. There is produce that needs to be sold.

Get preparation and market day systems more set up and streamlined. Do the branding. It might need a dedicated marketing wing that takes over all this work, which is to understand what it takes to bulk sell and then hand it over to farmers to some degree.

Actions and suggestions

- SKZN: Look into market stalls in the towns (Ixopo, Highflats,...) and involve LED sections of the LMs. Consider market-based stalls for the small growers as an opportunity
- Matatiele: Do the village-based marketing workshops to tease out any local options – although pensions there are all done in town.
- Explore options for livestock: Meat naturally for local livestock auctions and small poultry abattoirs as options. Also explore local butcheries as options for slaughtering and dressing meat for local markets
- Try mid-month markets closer to PMB, where civil servants are paid and compare with pension days.
- Explore delivery options in PMB and also in small centres
- Explore local transport options in a more concerted way.
- Consider setting up a ‘wing’ in MDF, to focus this work as it is labour intensive and needs consistent focus.
- Focus on production planning for markets
- Focus on value adding and branding in Ozwathini- as there is a specific interest there.
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