

Public–Private Pathways to Grow Emerging Farmer Entrepreneurship within the North West Province, South Africa

Faan Pelser

Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, North West University, Mafikeng, South Africa

Abstract:

Background: Entrepreneurship is central to agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods, yet South Africa’s emerging farmers continue to face binding constraints—market access, skills, finance, and extension capacity—that limit commercialisation and scale.

Purpose: This paper proposes and tests a practical success framework to strengthen emerging farmer entrepreneurship and commercial readiness.

Method: Using an explanatory mixed-methods design, we first surveyed 410 emerging farmers and 500 commercial farmers to quantify gaps in markets, equipment, support services, and managerial/technical skills. Follow-up interviews with four senior informants (government, co-ops, black commercial farmers) were used to explain and contextualise the quantitative results.

Findings: Commercial farmers benefit from stronger links with market agencies, better-equipped operations, and more frequent engagement with agricultural co-operatives and private technical support. Emerging farmers report deficits in financial resources, technical knowledge, and managerial skills, and remain concentrated in informal markets. Qualitative evidence highlights selection weaknesses and limited after-care in support programmes, alongside latent willingness from private actors to co-invest in training, market linkage, and mentoring.

Contribution: Synthesising our evidence with recent literature, we propose a capability-driven framework anchored in four levers: (1) targeted capability building (financial, technical, and market skills), (2) structured market access pathways, (3) blended finance with performance-based milestones, and (4) accountable public–private delivery partnerships. Recent studies on entrepreneurship drivers, extension capacity, smallholder market access, and conditional-grant performance corroborate the framework’s focus and feasibility.

Managerial implications: Provincial departments and agricultural co-operatives can operationalise the framework through jointly governed pipelines that (a) select committed candidates, (b) provide sequenced capability sprints, (c) guarantee defined market routes, and (d) release finance against verified milestones.

International Conference 2025

11th – 12th December 2025

Keywords:

Emerging Farmer Entrepreneurship, Agricultural Development, Capability Building, Market Access, Success Framework.