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WESTERN CAPE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE: MACROECONOMIC SUPPORT SERVICES

**Evaluation of the Availability, Extent, and
Utilisation of Agricultural Economic
Databases**

Summary (1/5/25 Format) Evaluation
Creative Consulting and Development Works

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POLICY SUMMARY

This report summarises the findings of the formative evaluation of the availability, extent and utilisation of agricultural economic databases provided by the Western Cape Department of Agriculture's Macroeconomic Support Services sub-programme. The evaluation consisted of four key deliverables: (1) a review of the programmes theory of change, (2) a provincial database comparison, (3) a client satisfaction assessment, and (4) interviews with data providers.

The review of the programmes theory of change highlighted a gap between some of the division's activities and the outcomes it aimed to realise. The key recommendations to address this are: (1) to identify the primary target group/s, and (2) develop a theory of change that directly seeks to realise tangible objectives related to the target group/s.

The database comparison with other provincial departments of agriculture suggested that the Western Cape offers the most extensive set of databases both online and upon request. KwaZulu Natal's department has databases available online; while Limpopo had databases available upon request. In both cases, the possible databases available were not comparable to the range offered by the Western Cape.

The client satisfaction assessment was undertaken through (1) an electronic survey of all database users between the period 2013 and 2015, and (b) key informant telephonic interviews with the top three client group users between 2013 and 2015. The key findings emerging from the combined data collection tools indicated that while the database users were aware that there were databases available, their knowledge was limited to the specific databases that they had requested. The majority of clients learned about the databases through word of mouth. The clients mainly sought census and economic data for use in both academic and government report writing. Overall, the divisions clients were very satisfied with the quality and reliability of the databases. The clients' experience of the databases' accessibility could be improved by listing and describing the full range of available databases –possibly on the Elsenburg website.

The data provider telephonic interviews established that the division sources data from credible and reliable sources. Their data sources released up-to-date information, which the division, in turn, is able to provide to its own client groups. The collection of census data was the main challenge identified in the interviews. This is significant, as census data was the most demanded data from the client groups. This proved to be the main external limitation faced by the division.

The most significant barrier that emerged from the evaluation was the capacity constraints faced by the division's small staff complement.

In summary, the evaluation established that the range of databases available from the division, while significant, is generally unknown to its clients. This is the key factor prohibiting the full utilisation of the databases. The division therefore needs to ensure that it undertakes proactive advertising efforts directed toward their primary target group/s in order to increase awareness about the available databases, and therefore increase utilisation and perceptions of accessibility.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

In November 2015, Creative Consulting & Development Works (CC&DW) was appointed by the Western Cape Department of Agriculture to conduct an evaluation of the Macroeconomic Support Services sub-programme. This evaluation examines the availability, extent, and utilisation of the division's agricultural economic databases. It was agreed that a key method through which this evaluation could be achieved, was through a client satisfaction assessment. This would allow for the key strengths and weaknesses regarding the availability, extent, and utilisation of the databases to be identified by the database users.

The evaluation process produced four key deliverables:

1. A theory of change review;
2. A comparative account of the databases available across the provincial departments of agriculture, as well as national;
3. A client satisfaction assessment through an online survey and interviews; as well as
4. Data provider interviews.

Methodology

The research team employed a formative evaluation approach. The evaluation followed a mixed-method design, which combined qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. 104 database users between 2013 and 2015 participated in the electronic survey. The evaluators in addition conducted 17 telephonic interviews with the division's top three client user groups. Of the total ten client groups, the top three were the Department Own (32%), Academic (16%), and Industry (12%) groups. The divisions staff members were also interviewed through one focus group discussion with three of the five staff members. The evaluators in addition conducted a face-to-face individual interview with the division manager. Lastly, ten of the 17 identified top data providers were telephonically interviewed in order to establish an understanding of the external factors

affecting the division's ability to provide data services to its clients. This is because the division is reliant upon secondary data sources, since it does not have the capacity to conduct primary data collection.

Key findings

To what extent do clients know about available databases and how did they learn of the databases?

- Clients generally knew that there were databases but their knowledge tended to be limited to the databases that they had requested. They did not know about the vast range of available databases.
- Clients learned about the databases through word of mouth.
- The division's clients considered historical data very important.

Which databases are of critical importance to clients?

- The main data in demand is census and economic data.
- The online and databases were usually used on an annual or quarterly basis.
- The main purpose the data was requested, was for academic, government and commercial report writing.
- Climate change and niche market databases were noted as lacking by the division.
- Most clients felt that their work would not be impossible to complete without access to the databases; but felt that sourcing the data elsewhere would be a considerably time-consuming process.

Has the provision of data/information by the WCDoA database programme assisted clients in improving their decision-making?

- Clients were satisfied overall with the quality, relevance and rate of responses from the division.
- The link between the database provision and decision-making was not clear.

How can the availability and accessibility of databases be improved?

- The division's clients considered the databases reliable.
- The division offered the best range of databases online as well as upon request when compared to the agricultural departments in other provinces.
- Accessibility could be improved by advertising the full range of available databases. In addition, accessibility could be further improved through enabling a database download function from the Department's website.
- A challenge faced by the division is that it depends on its data suppliers for updated and current data.
- Another challenge facing the division, is that the division comprises a small staff complement. In order to improve its services, it is necessary to expand. However, it is difficult to find and retain appropriate personnel.

Key recommendations

Improve knowledge of the databases

- The division should ensure that a complete list of their database inventory is publically viewable so that users know what information they can request and/or access.
- The inventory should note the data source/s used as well as the date it was updated.
- The division should consider additional means of disseminating information about their databases, including a newsletter and the use of social media.
- The department's website was the second highest means for learning of the databases, therefore more effort should be dedicated to improving its user-friendliness as well as using it as a means to communicate information about the databases and the updates thereof.

Improve Electronic Platform User-friendliness

- The division should investigate ways of making the databases downloadable from their website.
- The online tools should be made compatible with application-based platforms.

Human Resource Factors

- In the medium term, in-house IT expertise should be made available to enable the improvement and maintenance of the website.
- In the long term, it may be effective to make it a transversal requirement that all staff involved in data collection and management receive specialised training, including short courses on geographical information system (GIS).

Theory of Change Review

- The division needs to revisit its primary target groups.
- The division needs to determine the extent to which influencing decision-making is one of its aims.
- The division needs to make the links between the division's objectives, actions, and the Provincial Strategic Objectives clearer.

Evaluation Timing

- The evaluation coincided with the holiday and festive season, as well as the last quarter of the financial year. This proved a significant barrier to the collection of data. It is therefore recommended that future evaluations take place between April and September.

Report Structure

The report is divided into **seven** parts.

The **introduction (section)** introduces the report, outlining the purpose, evaluation objectives, evaluation questions and timeline followed in undertaking the evaluation.

The **methodology section** provides a brief outline of the methodology used in the evaluation, indicating how the evaluation was implemented, as well as its limitations.

The **formative evaluation findings and discussion** are then presented, according to the four guiding questions detailed in the terms of reference. Subsequently, **conclusions** are drawn and **recommendations** presented.

The literature review and the full comparative study of provincial databases conducted to inform this evaluation can be reviewed in the full version of this report.

INTRODUCTION

In November 2015, Creative Consulting & Development Works (CC&DW) was appointed by the Western Cape Department of Agriculture to conduct an evaluation of the Macroeconomic Support Services sub-programme. This evaluation examines the availability, extent, and utilisation of the division's agricultural economic databases. It was agreed that a key method through which this evaluation could be achieved, was through a client satisfaction assessment. This would allow for the key strengths and weaknesses regarding the availability, extent, and utilisation of the databases to be identified by the database users.

The overall purpose of this evaluation is:

1. To assess the extent to which the Western Cape Government Department of Agriculture database services provided by the 'Macro-economic Support Services' are or are not servicing the purposes they aim to serve, and
2. To understand how the services could be optimised in order to more effectively realise the intended outcomes and impacts.

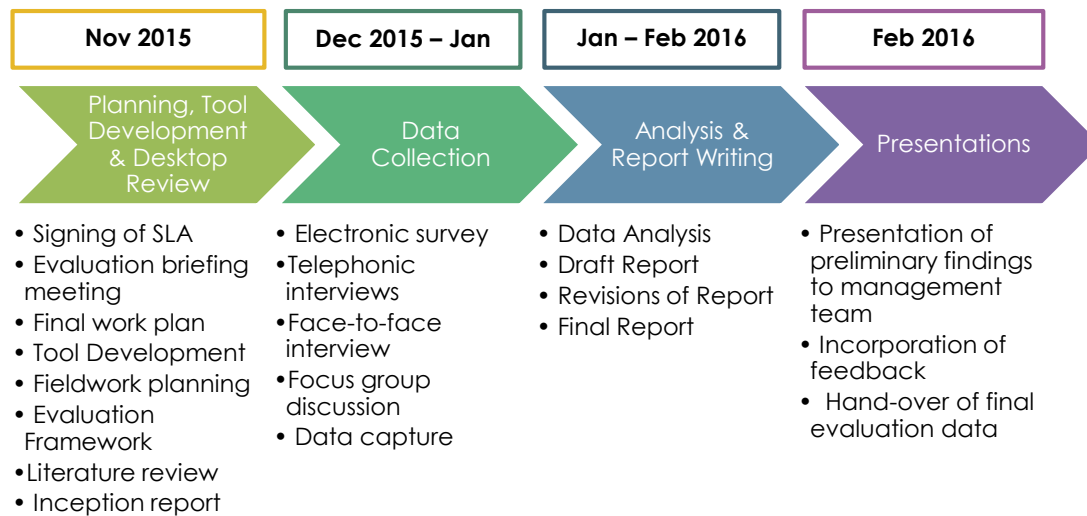
In order to achieve this purpose, the evaluation was designed to produce four key deliverables:

1. A theory of change review;
2. A comparative account of the databases available across the provincial departments of agriculture, as well as national;
3. A client satisfaction assessment through an online survey and interviews; as well as
4. Data provider interviews.

1.1 EVALUATION TIMELINE

The evaluation followed the below stages:

FIGURE 1: OVERVIEW OF EVALUATION TIMELINE



PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

The Macroeconomic Support Services division is a sub-programme nested under the Agricultural Economic Services programme. The division was developed as a result of agricultural economic enquiries being sent to the Department, which prompted the decision to develop departmental databases. The division aims to impact positively upon decision-making.

The division comprises five staff members: one manager, one economist, a chief administration clerk, and two administration clerks. Together, the division's staff maintains approximately 256 databases.¹ The division does not undertake primary data collection; instead it relies on key industry data providers in order to collate and develop its databases.

¹ This number is derived from the "HOD Portal" document that lists all of the databases. The Stats SA "2011 Census" and "2007 Survey" were counted once despite the itemised listing of the data contained therein. The 6 "Departmental Projects" were also not included in this count.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation team employed a diagnostic evaluation approach. The evaluation followed a mixed-method design, which combined qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis.

The following tools were used for data collection:

- Electronic survey of clients that had accessed the division's databases between 2013 and 2015;
- Key informant telephonic interviews with the top three client groups that used the databases between 2013 and 2015:
 - Department Own
 - Academic
 - Industry
- Key informant interviews with the division staff:
 - Focus group discussion;
 - Individual face-to-face interview;
- Key informant telephonic interviews with data providers.

Figure 2 below is a summary of the sample achieved in the evaluation.

FIGURE 2: EVALUATION SAMPLE

Informants	Data collection	Method for data collection	Sample size	Achieved
Clients accessing databases	Client satisfaction surveys	Electronic survey	100 respondents (minimum target)	104 completed surveys

Programme manager	Key informant interview	Face-to-face semi-structured interview	1	Complete
Programme staff	Focus group discussion	Semi-structured FGD guidelines	1 x 3 - 5 participants	Complete
Database information providers	Telephonic interviews	Semi-structured interview	10 – 17 key data providers	10 completed interviews
Database client groups	Telephonic interviews	Semi-structured interview	17 – 21 participants	17 completed interviews

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1.1.1 Participants

Partially outdated contact details: Unfortunately, a fair number of email addresses were often no longer valid. The contact details used were those for the clients recorded in the enquiry database from 2013 to 2015. There were no telephone numbers and therefore it became nearly impossible to contact people whose email addresses were incorrect or invalid.

Refusal to Participate: A number of key informants identified were unwilling to participate. In some cases, this was because they had completed the online survey and

did not see the value in participating in two tools for the same evaluation. Others were unwilling because of the time of the year – they were under pressure to finish off their own matters before the end of the year, and then were concentrating on catching up with work upon their return in the New Year.

1.1.2 Data Collection

Incomplete surveys: Only sixty-seven respondents fully completed the online survey; the remaining surveys were partially and or incomplete. This is despite every effort to ensure that partially completed surveys would be avoided. The questions were made compulsory except in the instances where the question was dependent on a positive answer in the preceding question.

1.1.3 Logistical Constraints

Unfavourable timing: The evaluation coincided with the holiday and festive season and the end of the financial year. This had significant effects on the availability of people to participate in interviews and the online survey. As a result, the data collection phase had to be extended, which presented a significant time constraint for the analysis and report-writing phase of the evaluation.

Limited time scope: The time within which to complete the evaluation was rather limited. The limited timeframe meant that the survey and undertaking interviews commenced simultaneously. This proved to be a challenge – as noted above – as the clients that had participated in the survey were generally unwilling to be interviewed.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION

The findings are presented below in accordance with the key questions identified in the terms of reference. “Respondents” refers to the survey respondents (n = 67) and “Key informants” has been used to refer to the key informant client group interviews (n = 17).

“Macroeconomic Support Services” and “Data Providers” have each been used in reference to the key informant interviews with each of these two groups.

1.1.4 Question 1: The extent and how the clients learned about the data available to enhance their decision-making?

1.1.4.1 What number and type of databases are known by clients?

Survey: The respondents were generally familiar with the databases available. The top three databases that the respondents were familiar with were StatsSA Agricultural 2011 Census (52%), Crop Commodity Prices (49%), and Western Cape 2007 Agriculture Survey (49%).

Key Informants: The Academic client group was unfamiliar with the databases maintained by the division. Their knowledge was limited to the online tools. A few Department Own and Industry key informants were aware of a relatively small (and similar) number of databases.²

Macroeconomic Support Services: There were diverging views about how well utilised the databases were. One informant (n = 1) believed that they were well utilised whereas another (n = 1) found that they were underutilised due to a lack of awareness of the full spectrum of available databases.

Data providers: A good range of data was provided by the top data sources used by the division.³ Data providers could note more than one primary target audience.⁴ These results are encouraging since the data providers' top three target groups overlap with the top client user groups of the division's databases. This suggests that the division is reaching the appropriate audiences with the databases.

² These were: Agricultural Land Prices; Game Industry Prices; Agritourism; Game databases; Black Farmer Statistics; Livestock databases; and Western Cape 2007 Agricultural Survey.

³ Sectoral information and news was the most provided information type followed by Game auction information; Producer information; and Census data. This reflects the data providers interviewed and this is only indicative of the available data.

⁴ The main target groups in order were Government; Agri-business/Industry; Academics; Farmers; Media; and Consultants.

1.1.4.2 Where and how did clients become aware of these databases?

Survey: 37% of respondents learned about the databases through word of mouth or referral by a colleague or friend. 25% of respondents were not aware of the databases, which is a very high number given that the reason the respondents were included in the survey in the first instance was due to their request for information from the division. 24% of the respondents learned about the databases through the Elsenburg website, which suggests that it has potential to be better utilised for advertising the databases.

Key informants: All the key informants were aware of the databases because of word of mouth and/or referrals from colleagues. Additionally, the Department Own group was aware of the databases due to internal departmental communications.

Macroeconomic Support Services: The division anticipated that word of mouth was their main means of advertisement, and did not indicate a need for this to change.

1.1.4.3 What is the diversity of databases available to clients and what is the demand for these?

Survey: 81% of respondents found that the databases were relevant to their needs. The main data type demanded was economic (67%) followed by crop data (45%) and livestock data (45%). Respondents were asked to rank their top five most important databases (as offered by the division). The aggregate results indicated that the respondents selected the following databases: StatsSA Agricultural 2011 Census (51%), Agricultural Land Prices, and the Western Cape 2007 Agriculture Survey.

Key informants: The data demands from the key informants varied:

- Department Own (n = 8): commodity price, resource (e.g. rainfall), and market information.

- Academic (n = 5): climate change (e.g. water usage; food security), commodity (e.g. yield; productivity), economic and financial, and census data.
- Industry (n = 4): livestock price, land price, and niche market data.

Macroeconomic Support Services: The division key informants were aware of the high demand for census information. A key informant noted that a constraint with the census data is that the data is published irregularly and so the information available was rather dated.

1.1.4.4 What is the time-span of these datasets?

This question was posed to the respondents and key informants by asking about their need for historical data.

Survey: 75% of the respondents (n = 67) needed historical data that backdated more than three years. 15% indicated that they need historical data dating back three years. 7% reported that they needed data backdating two years. 18% said that historical data was not applicable to their individual and/or organisational needs. The historical data was said to be needed in order to track short-, medium-, and long-term trends, as well as to enable comparative and regression analyses to be performed.

Key informants: Historical data was important for nearly all of the key informants. The general sentiment was that data should date back as far as possible for research purposes in order to establish trends. Some key informants did not need data further back than three to five years, since their focus was on recent trends.

1.1.4.5 With relation to the demand for data by client groups, has this changed through the years and what would the reasons for this be?

Macroeconomic Support Services: The demand for the data has changed. Academics are increasingly requesting data from the division's databases. This was

thought to be because they are learning about the reliability and availability of the cost-free data available from the division.

1.1.5 Question 2: Which databases are of critical importance to clients?

1.1.5.6 What are the utilisation rates of various databases by segmented client groups?

Survey: 32% of the respondents use the online tools quarterly and 26% use the online tools monthly. 19% of the respondents have never used the online tools. 36% of the respondents reported that they contacted the Department directly for data information on an annual basis, and 27% indicated that they do so quarterly.

Key informants: 28% of the key informants said that they use the online tools occasionally and 24% noted that they never use them. 21% of the key informants reported that they use them rarely.

1.1.5.7 Is the data used for farming decisions, report-writing, consultation work, research purposes, economic models, academic research and/or which other purposes?

Survey: 30% of the respondents use the data for commercial research. 27% use it for government report writing, and 21% use it for academic report writing. 36% of the respondents said that the data assisted them with establishing background information and/or developing a trend analysis. This overlaps with the 17% of participants that stated that the data assisted with their academic report writing. 24% of the respondents stated that the way the data assisted them was not applicable. There was a separate category for those that found that their data was not useful (6%) and so it is likely that the 24% comprise respondents that do not recall using the databases before.

Key informants: The key informants had similar purposes for their data usage. The additional uses noted included advising farmers, instructing students, workshops, and analytical tool development.

Macroeconomic Support Services: The division anticipated the main use of the data to be for government reporting and academic research. The above confirmed this expectation. A key informant interviewed also noted that the data was likely used for farming decisions as well as decision-making.

1.1.5.8 Which databases does the Department lack, which databases need to be developed?

Survey and key informants: 46% of the respondents and key respondents indicated that the division should develop additional databases. 36% said it was not necessary, 9% were unsure and 7% said it was not applicable. The themes that emerged from the suggestions for new databases were farm-related and market-related.

1.1.5.9 What would be the impact, should these databases not be available to users, including the broader impact on the agricultural sector? This will involve establishing whether clients have access to similar data from other sources.

Survey: 67% of respondents believed that their work would be affected should the databases provided by the division no longer be available. The remaining 33% reported that their work would be unaffected. Respondents were asked if another data source provided the data that they needed. 52% of respondents indicated that they did not know, 27% said yes, and 21% said no. Respondents were asked, if applicable, how often they used their alternative data source. 28% of the respondents said that they occasionally used the alternative source, 22% said that they frequently did, and 22% said that they never did. Two reasons for the usage of the alternative data sources emerged: to fill gaps in the division's data, as well as to crosscheck the data.

Key informants: The general sentiment among the key informants was that their work would not be impossible without the data supplied by the division, but it would be considerably delayed and more difficult to complete.

Macroeconomic Support Services: The division expected that price information could be found elsewhere, but certain databases are unique to the division that would not be replaceable – such as agri-tourism and the historical data dimension of their price data.

1.1.6 Question 3: How has the provision of data/information by the division assisted clients in improving their decision-making?

1.1.6.10 Have enquiry expectations been met in terms of quality, relevance and response-time?

The relevance of the databases has already been discussed earlier in this summary and therefore has not been replicated here.

Survey:

- **Quality:** 40% of respondents considered the quality of the response/s that they received from the division to be “very useful”. 31% indicated they were “useful”, and 12% said “not applicable”. This suggests that overall the divisions’ clients were satisfied with the quality of the responses received.
- **Rate:** When asked to describe their overall satisfaction with the response rate, 49% of respondents said that they were “satisfied”. 30% reported that they were “very satisfied” and 10% indicated “neutral”. Notably, the combined result for “very dissatisfied” and “dissatisfied” is 1%, which is indicative of very high satisfaction levels.

Key informants:

- **Quality:** Overall, the key informants were satisfied with the quality of the services they received. They generally described it as “very good” and said that they would refer a colleague to the division.
- **Rate:** No complaints were made about the response rate. When mentioned, it was considered to be “quick”.

Macroeconomic Support Services: The division considered their databases to be of a high standard. They identified capacity constraints as the main barrier to improving their response rates.

1.1.7 Question 4: How can the availability and accessibility of databases be improved?

1.1.7.11 What were/are the critical success factors in the development, maintenance and dissemination of databases and its data?

Key Informants: When asked about additional ways that the division could advertise their databases, the division's participation in public presentations was suggested by 29% of the key informants. 24% suggested that the website should be better utilised. University lectures, magazines, and communications with industrial bodies were suggested by 12% of the key informants. Please note that key informants could suggest more than one way of additional advertising.

Macroeconomic Support Division: Having appropriate personnel was noted as the most important factor for a successful division.

Data providers: The data providers regularly released updated information. The data providers noted that sometimes data collected is hampered by delayed responses from their respondents.

1.1.7.12 Is needed data and information easily available to clients?

Survey Respondents: 49% of the respondents did not use alternative data sources. 31% said that their alternative source was not more accessible than the divisions. 19% said that the alternative data source was more accessible. The main reason for this response was that the alternative source made their data available and downloadable in an Excel format on their website. They added that the website was more user-friendly than the Department's.

Key Informants: One key informant (n = 1) reiterated concern about the user-friendliness of the website.

1.1.7.13 How can access to information be improved?

In response to how access can be improved, please refer to the above section.

1.1.7.14 What quality control measures are there in place, or should be in place with specific reference to the management of datasets and IT systems?

Macroeconomic Support Services: The division follows the Standard Operating Procedures required to ensure that their data is verified. This primarily sees that the division's manager crosschecks the data captured on a quarterly basis.

Data Providers: The data providers interviewed all had internal quality assurance measures in place to verify and ensure the reliability of their data.

1.1.7.15 What can be learnt from other provinces' data provision services?

The comparison of databases maintained by the different provincial departments of agriculture strongly suggests that the WCDoA has the broadest range of agricultural databases available. KwaZulu Natal offered a small selection of databases that could be downloaded in an Excel format from their website. While Limpopo had a very limited number of databases available upon request from their agricultural department. The evaluation considered databases offered by the National government's website since the standard set at a comparative provincial level was not particularly high.

CONCLUSIONS

1.1.8 Question 1: The extent and how the clients learned about the data available to enhance their decision-making?

The survey respondents tended to have a general awareness of the available databases. However, the key informants were generally less aware of the databases. It is notable that the academic group was unfamiliar with the databases maintained. This is a cause for concern, since academics are one of the target groups identified during the key informant interviews with the division. This result indicates that their reliance on word of mouth as an advertising strategy may not be reaching this key target group and other strategies for advertising may need to be undertaken.

Word of mouth is the main way that information about the databases is spread. However, this is to be expected, since the division undertakes little-to-no proactive advertising. While flat screens were used in the rural offices, this would not likely improve, for example academics' knowledge about the databases. Thus, more targeted advertising is necessary.

The main data demand across the board was for economic data. Crop and livestock data was also a shared data need from the survey respondents and the key informants. However, the key informants also suggested the need for more climate change focused databases.

Historical data was an important asset offered by the division that was required by almost all client user groups.

The addition of the Agri-Stats tool to the online platform has probably added to the academic group's use of the division's data. This is suggested by the growth in demand from this client group for databases and the fact that the website had been revamped in 2014. Increasing the division's presence online should further appeal to this client group.

Given the data demands from this group, it seems that a possible reason that more academics are requesting data from the division is because of the importance of climate change on the research agenda.

1.1.9 Question 2: Which databases are of critical importance to clients?

The usage patterns suggest that the data is used for tracking or understanding seasonal or annual patterns. The usage patterns are difficult to interpret because the usage rates are very dependent upon what the data is primarily being used for, and what the research subject is.

It is apparent that the data is used for an array of purposes – primary academic and government report writing. It seems that perhaps the data – overall – does not inform decision-making in terms of policy and farm planning as directly as expected, however it is likely to influence these factors indirectly.

Climate change seemed to be an underlying theme in the suggested additional databases. Interest was expressed about the transformation of the sector in terms of black farmers, as well as the number of small hold farms emerging. Concern was expressed about the outdated census data given that there are rapid changes happening in the sector that are not captured by the 2011 and 2007 censuses.

The results show that clients rely quite heavily upon the division for their data needs – with many reporting that they did not know of an alternative data source or that they could not source the data elsewhere. The division is certainly used as a “first-stop” data source, and their services seem to assist greatly the work of their clients. While some databases could be alternatively sourced – something most clients did not know, since they have not had to do so – they would likely lose access to historical data since this has not been recorded by the data source used by the division. Given the earlier statements about the importance of historical data, it is possible that the clients do not fully know what they would lose access to without the division – which was confirmed by 52% of respondents not knowing if alternative sources existed.

1.1.10 Question 3: How has the provision of data/information by the division assisted clients in improving their decision-making?

Clients seem to be satisfied overall with the quality, relevance and rate of responses from the division.

The theory of change review suggests the division revisit the theory guiding the programme. The current logic of the division makes significant assumptions about the direct impact of the databases on good decision-making. However, the existence of the databases – regardless of their good quality – is not a guarantee that the individuals and/or groups that ought to be utilising them (1) know that they exist, and (2) know how to utilise them appropriately.

To this end, it is important that the division is clear about who their primary target group is for the databases and streamline their work in order to bridge the gap between existing databases and the databases positively influencing decision-making. This may require that training of key target group constituents be undertaken – if not by the Department, then by an identified partner organisation. This measure should help to ensure that their valuable databases are utilised meaningfully and appropriately.

1.1.11 Question 4: How can the availability and accessibility of databases be improved?

The advertising alternatives have been discussed earlier.

Overall, the divisions clients were satisfied with the accessibility of the data available from the division.

The division has access to reliable and updated data. The relevant challenge is therefore the matter of capacity within the division.

The databases maintained by the division do not seem to face quality issues and the quality assurance measures in place seem satisfactory. In addition, the divisions data sources produce reliable and verified data.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Many of the recommendations that have emerged from the various components of this evaluation overlap. Thus, it makes logical sense to group the recommendations derived from this evaluation together thematically. As far as applicable, the recommendations have been divided according to short-, medium- and long-term recommendations.

1.1.12 Electronic Platforms

1.1.12.16 Short Term

- **Website:** Provide an inventory of the online tools as well as an overview of the data available upon request. The inventory of the databases available upon request should note the most recent updates, as well as the primary data source/s. This will help to demonstrate that the data is reliable, and improves its academic credibility. The overviews of the databases available upon request will help clients to make informed requests to the division, and should help to improve the utilisation of the databases overall.
- **Social media:** Increase the department's online presence by making use of social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter. This would allow the department to freely notify followers of updates as well as ascertain what their users' needs are.
- **Email:** Database availability and updates could be communicated through a monthly newsletter to subscribers.

1.1.12.17 Medium Term

- **Website:** Investigate how the databases could be made available for download from the website. It is recommended that a similar format to the DAFF's Resource Centre be followed.

- **Application-based platforms:** Make the online tools compatible on smart phones and tablets to improve accessibility for client users in the field.

1.1.13 Human Resource Factors

1.1.13.18 Short Term

- **Internship:** The development of an internship programme could help attract appropriate staff to the division by exposing them to a range of activities conducted by the Department.

1.1.13.19 Medium Term

- **IT Expertise:** Employ a dedicated IT specialist housed within the division since the improvements on the online platforms require ongoing maintenance and support.

1.1.13.20 Long Term

- **Capacity constraints:** A key barrier noted in the evaluation concerned the division's capacity constraints. Ideally, this constraint could be lessened by implementing the recommendations in this report. However, it remains a challenge that needs attention should the division wish to expand the services it provides.
- **GIS training:** Encourage a transversal requirement that all Departmental staff involved in data collection and management be exposed to training that includes short courses on GIS (at varying levels according to need).

1.1.14 Database Suggestions

1.1.14.21 Short Term

- **Standardisation of Game Categories:** The Department should collaborate with the relevant industry actors – such as game auctioneers – in order to establish a standard vocabulary for the different game categories.

1.1.14.22 Medium- to Long Term

- **Additional databases:**
 1. Niche market information, such as organic and free range;
 2. Climate change related matters – rainfall; drought; food security.

1.1.14.23 Ongoing

- **Historical data:** This is a unique feature of the databases offered by the division and this work should continue.

1.1.15 Other

- **Revisit Theory of Change:** identify primary target groups and revise theory of change accordingly.
- **Future Evaluations:** Future evaluations should be implemented between April and the end of September due to the fact that people are general unavailable to participate during the holiday/festive season and towards the end of the financial year.