

University of Hohenheim

Institute of Social Sciences in Agriculture (430)  
Chair of Societal Transition and Agriculture (430b)



# **Governance of programmes promoting local food systems for rural sustainable development in Vaalharts, South Africa**

—

## **Adopting a right to food lens**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of the Master of Science in Organic Agriculture and Food Systems

by

**Traute Pott**

Supervisors:

PD Dr. Stephanie Lemke  
Societal Transition and Agriculture, University of Hohenheim, Germany  
and Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience (CAWR)  
Coventry University, UK

Dr. Sabine Zikeli  
Institute for Crop Sciences  
Coordination for Organic Farming and Consumer Protection  
University of Hohenheim, Germany

External Supervisor  
Dr. Nicole Claasen  
Africa Unit for Transdisciplinary Health Research (AUTHeR)  
North West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa

This work was financially supported by the Foundation fiat panis

12 September 2016

## **Abstract**

In South Africa, centralised food systems not only shape unhealthy food environments but also contribute to decreased economic activities and employment in rural areas. In contrast, local food systems (LFS) can promote more equitable, empowered and resilient local communities.

This study explores the governance of programmes supporting local food production and distribution. National food security, nutrition and agriculture policies and programmes were analysed and implementation of three government-supported projects investigated. A right to food lens was adopted, focusing on the commitment of programmes to the human rights principles Participation, Accountability, Non-discrimination, Transparency, Human dignity, Empowerment, and Rule of law (PANTHER). The study was conducted in the Vaalharts region in the central northern part of South Africa. A literature review was conducted in order to identify the national legal and political framework surrounding agriculture and nutrition interventions in South Africa. Four government programmes that shape agricultural projects in Vaalharts were selected. These national programmes were analysed and their local implementation was investigated in three government-supported projects. A qualitative research design was applied conducting two focus groups and 21 interviews with different actors such as government representatives, smallholder farmers, retailers, schools, local NGO's and business consultants. In addition, observations were recorded in a field book. All interviews were transcribed and a content analysis with Atlas.ti was conducted. Adopting a right to food lens enables to perceive people as rights holders instead of beneficiaries, who actively participate in programmes that promote LFS and enhance rural livelihoods. The PANTHER principles can serve as a guideline to assess and monitor projects in order to reveal potentials and constraints of LFS. While the legal framework in South Africa is supportive towards LFS, various challenges are being experienced with regard to implementation of programmes, such as lack of transparency and accountability and limited participation and empowerment of beneficiaries. These challenges are often related to missing intergovernmental communication. Findings show that government departments struggle to cooperate and thus don't make use of potential synergies. The focus of programmes is on food production while important aspects of LFS such as healthy nutrition and environmentally sustainable production and consumption are neglected. At the same time programmes observed have the potential to empower farmers and the wider rural community and therefore to promote LFS if training, infrastructure, tools and production inputs reach beneficiaries. It can be concluded that LFS have the potential to support sustainable rural development if they are accompanied by willing and capable institutions that facilitate participatory governance. However, governmental programmes and their governance are still far from being comprehensive with regard to LFS. A more progressive application of a rights-based approach to policy design and implementation could contribute positively to sustainable rural development in South Africa.