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Contribution of Public Extension to Food Security of Smallholder Farmers in Limpopo Province, South Africa in an Era of Climate Variability

D. B. Afful[1], I. B. Oluwatayo[1] , K. A. Kyei[2], K. Ayisi[3] and E. M. Zwane[4]

[1]Department of Agricultural Economics and Animal Production, [3]Risk and Vulnerability Science Centre/VLIR-IUC, Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, University of Limpopo, South Africa
[2]University of Venda, Department of Statistics, Thohoyandou 0950, South Africa Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
[4]Limpopo Department of Agriculture, 69 Biccard Street, Polokwane, 0700, South Africa

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ABSTRACT The paper examined the effectiveness of public extension support for dryland smallholder grain producers. Both probability and non-probability sampling procedures were used to select districts, Local Agricultural Offices and farmers from 20 villages of Limpopo province, South Africa in January 2014. Data was collected from field-level extension agents and farmers using semi-structured questionnaires. Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to analyze the data. Results show that most agents promoted conservation agriculture as a climate variability coping strategy. Furthermore, public extension support made a difference in farmers' yield over non-extension recipients' yields, though small. Forty percent of maize producers who received extension support bought extra maize meal for home consumption indicating maize yields from farmers' own production was insufficient to ensure household food security. Findings also suggest non-farming sources contributed more to respondents' household income than farming. Extension support, therefore, needs improvement to effectively support farmers' production in light of climate variability.