

## **Shielding Rural Migrants from Unemployment-induced Poverty: The Informal Prickly Pear Market**

**Sinazo Ntsonge and Gavin Fraser\***

*<sup>1</sup>Department of Economics and Economic History, Rhodes University,  
Makhanda, South Africa*

**KEYWORDS** Informal Employment. Invasive Alien Plants. Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality. *Opuntia ficus-indica*

**ABSTRACT** This study highlighted the role that an informal market plays in shielding unemployed rural migrants in urban areas from unemployment-induced poverty using the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality (NMBM) informal Prickly Pear Market as a case study. The purpose of this study was to show how earnings from self-employment or informal employment can be effective in reducing poverty. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework was used as the theoretical basis for unpacking the household socioeconomic factors that influenced the informal prickly pear marketers' decision to engage in the market. The study found that despite the prickly pear's short-term availability, the income was channelled towards school supplies and sustained households during the month in addition to social grants, especially after the grant income had finished. The study aimed to revive interest in the *Opuntia ficus-indica* species, as one of the ways by which poverty can be reduced in the Eastern Cape.