

ABSTRACT

Much is known about the environmental impacts of drought and very little is known about the socio-economic impacts particularly on farm owners whose livelihood is mainly dependent on agricultural production. This study investigates the socio economic impact of 2004 drought on farm owners of Nkonkobe Local Municipality in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The areas of Nkonkobe Local Municipality that were visited include Fort Beaufort, Seymour, Balfour, Alice and Middledrift. Only farm owners from the areas that were reported to have been affected by the 2004 drought were visited and interviewed. The information on areas that were affected by 2004 drought was retrieved from the files of the Department of Agriculture in Amathole District Municipality. The study was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. Stratified random sampling technique was used because the population of Nkonkobe consists of different types of farmers including commercial, emerging and communal farmers. In addition to the main objective, the sub objectives of this study include evaluation of the extent of intervention made by government in 2004, evaluating the status of drought mitigation strategies and/or drought plans in Nkonkobe during 2004 and presently.

The findings of the study reveal that Nkonkobe Municipality has the largest number of livestock and communal farming is practised on the largest scale. Apart from the impressive literacy rate, the majority of farm owners do not have agricultural training and as a result of that, they do not know how to develop drought plans. High poverty rate in Nkonkobe has contributed towards low level agricultural training because most of the farmers cited lack of money as their reason for not undergoing training. The high percentage of uninsured farmers is a cause for concern because it means that government will continue to spend large amounts of money on drought relief. Other socio economic impacts that were experienced by farmers in different areas of Nkonkobe include a decline in the educational access of children, deterioration of health condition for farm families, high levels of debts, migration of family members to urban areas, loss of hope and high stress levels of affected families.