Institutional dynamics at an organic farming programme
Ezemvelo Farmers Organization (EFO)
Research Design

• Research questions?
• How much income do EFO members generate and its contribution to their livelihoods
• What are the key opportunities and constraints on increased levels of income for the small scale organic producers within the EFO. (value chain, access to land, institutional arrangements, skills)
Methods

- Quantitative and Qualitative interviews
- 45 fully certified EFO members who have supplied the packhouse in 2010/2011
- Indepth interviews with farmers (current and past EFO committee members,
  - depot/collection centre officials (village central areas where produce is delivered by farmers before taken to packhouse)
  - Most senior members who joined at inception
EFO Background

- Organization formed in 2001 by group of subsistence farmers
- Objective: to utilize indigenous knowledge in farming traditional crops as a source of income
- Umbumbulu: farmers from Ogagwini, Zigeni, KwaMahleka, Nungwane, Hhwayi villages
- Umgungundlovu and Ugu District Municipalities
- Assisted by UKZN Crop Scientist (Prof Modi) to get organic certification from AFRISCO
- Secured markets: Pick & Pay and Woolworths
- Supported by NDA in 2009 for water tanks, training, stipends for admin and coordinating staff, building of packhouse, tractor, travel.
Main Crops Grown and Marketed

- Amadumbe, Potatoes, Maize, Spinach, Sweet potatoes, Beans, Butternut
- Amadumbe (sold to Farmwise, hawkers, directly to street vendors)
- Sweet potatoes, beans
- Land from 0.25ha to about 9ha
Land Tenure

- Communal land, administered by traditional authority
- Most respondents inherited from parents/family relatives
- Homestead gardens and fields
- Once issues around land allocation for building EFO packhouse- inkosi demanded R50,000 for a site donated by a member,
- Farmers have secure rights over land that acquired even through under traditional authority, that can use for own purpose.
Membership of EFO

- 2009: reported to have a membership of more than 200
- Current membership renewal records: 126
- Participation in meetings declining drastically
- Meetings 1st Monday of the month coincide with payment of social grants
- Transport from various izigodi (Nungwane and Hwayi) to Ogagwini problematic (have to take two taxis)
- Now no longer getting lift from project mentor (his busy schedule) therefore they cannot get to meetings easily
- Feeling of discrimination because of location within other inkosi jurisdiction
AGM around Nov/Dec committee members elected since 2010 have not changed committee as it was recommended that the current members must handover to new committee after NDA project funds are accounted for.

Board of Directors - not aligned - still require education around the cooperative model and management / member

• Still operate in the old fashion (before forming coop) most cooperative principles and constitution not observed

• appointed coordinator/ facilitator for day to day operations
Leadership and management of EFO

- Conflict over payment of committee members over and above transport allowances they receive for official trips.
- Appointment of staff like drivers also source of conflict within committee members
- Still no organizational policies
- They received training on coop governance: not adequate was a high level for members to comprehend
- Financial administration: assisted in basics: records, accounting
Certification

- Renewed yearly, sponsored by Woolworths and others through mentors assistance
- Expensive: about R30,000. Why so expensive and important? Who gets this money?
- Certificate is presented in meeting after inspections, few never seen it.
- Others think it stays at Farmwise,
- Farmers know the rules in terms of planting, no chemicals, non-compliance disqualifies farmer
- Get information during inspections
- But do not know who provides certification
Certification

- 2012 couldn’t get certificate, did not sell to packhouse, inspections done late as no sponsor for certificate, many farmer losses
- Wish that they can own theirs or it can be valid for more years. Farmers need to contribute, need not depend on sponsors.
- Must be discussed in full meetings but now poor attendance and attention to serious issues is lacking
Marketing produce - the packhouse (FARMWISE) contract

- Most farmers indicated it's a Verbal contract
- Written: 6 - there is a certificate allowing them to sell
- No set quantity
- Name tags, coded, specific species kgs, date and isigodi
- Dates discussed and announced in meetings to bring at local delivery centres, villages that are ready indicate in meetings
- Price negotiated by committee prior to supply, propose to farmwise, FW decides on price
Marketing

- Organic catches Premium yes: R8:40 per kg
- R100 (hawkers) vs R112 if they sell to packhouse
- 3 members: no premium, sometimes they are not of quality
- Mostly its money expected, sometimes more: said not because the scales are different
- Can sell to hawkers
- Rejection small, cracked, not clean: brought two, three weeks later, with mould, mixed up. Only told local representative
- Price negotiated by committee, propose to farmwise
- Grading represented by driver, no representative there any more
- Use rejected produce as seeds, own consumption give no neighbours
- Happens that other villages produce is not collected: No direct action taken, explanation provided to those farmers.
- Money collected by from bank and mentor drives to deliver
- Markets: waiting for the packhouse that is being built now
- will they send to Farmwise now that the NDA packhouse is built?
Marketing

- One incident: packhouse brought back produce and said that there was more stock and stores are not buying,
- why not talk to them first? Brought back and it's not the person own product
EFO assistance to farmers

• Product quality, soil fertility - only in one year when lime was organised and chicken dung was spread over the soil – farmers were able to realize good yields
• Most farmers do feel that soil are no longer producing quality crops
• small size which are sent off the packhouse cannot sell them and use for seeds, consumption
• No direct support, no structured organization programme. Members share knowledge among themselves individually or ask in meetings: No extension support
• Benefited: fencing (older members) and through NDA got water tanks, pipes and cheaper tractor services
Policy implications

- Small organizations dealings with large retailers
- Exploration of local/informal markets
- Operating a business but mainly depend on sponsors
- Understand Legal framework/Coop governance enforce rules/operations
- Skilled staff for support small producers
- Project proves income generation and contribution to livelihoods.