

Targeted investigation report 2025

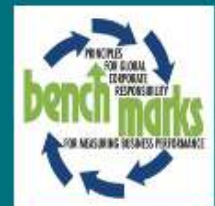
Kwa Zulu Natal: Newcastle Decline of agricultural practice in the Allen farm community

First Edition



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1. Background and Context

Dannhauser is named after an old farming family that lived in the area. Dannhauser is one of three local municipalities within the Amajuba District Municipality and covers an area of approximately 1516 square kilometres. It is the smallest municipality within the District Municipality. Main towns are Dannhauser, Hattingspruit, Inverness, Kilegethe, Klipbank, Milford, Normandien, Nyanyadu, Rutland, Tendeka, and Witteklip.

The town of Dannhauser is located midway between Durban and Johannesburg on the main railway line, about eight kilometres off the national road between the two cities. Some of the largest coal-producing mines in KwaZulu-Natal surround it. Numerous rivers flow through the municipal area, the most important being the Ngagane and uMzinyathi Rivers, and there are scenic landscapes in the western portion of the municipality.

The population of the municipality is currently at 105,302 people (Census 2015). Population densities are highest in the Traditional Authority Areas in the north-eastern portion of the municipal area and in the town of Dannhauser itself.

Dannhauser functions as a small rural service center (providing commercial and service facilities and agricultural industries and services), and is not a large employment generator. Residents of the municipal area depend on the larger urban centers of Dundee and Newcastle for job opportunities and higher-order goods and services. Additionally, the mining sector provides employment, which is vital for the district's economic growth.

2. Problem description

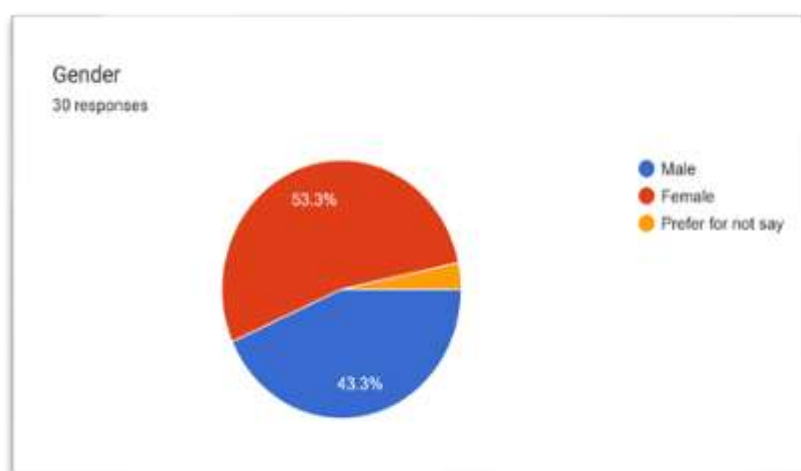
The problem to be addressed is the decline of agricultural practice in the Allen farm community since 2007, when Magdalen mine started operating in this community, and they began to experience water scarcity. The small-scale farmers were now unable to continue farming due to water shortage and soil degradation.

Small-scale farmers, women in particular, are directly affected by this because women are believed to be caregivers. Should local municipality and mine owners fail to address this issue of land and water, this will have a bad impact on women, and this will result in a higher rate of poverty in the Allen farm community.

Dannhouser local municipality must avail itself to supply the community of Allen with water. And make sure the land is accessible for women to practice agriculture.

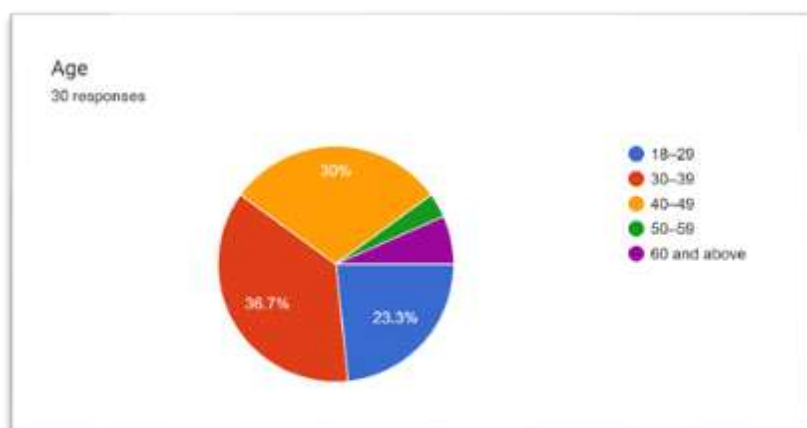
3. Investigation results

This year, we examined the decline of agriculture at Allen Farm. We expected 50 farmers to respond to this survey, but only 30 responses were received from small-scale farmers. This year, we looked at the decline of farming at Allen Farm to understand the challenges small-scale farmers are facing. We hoped to get 50 responses to our survey, but only 30 farmers participated. These farmers shared their experiences, including problems like limited resources, poor access to markets, and other difficulties affecting their farming. The lower response rate may show that it is hard to reach some farmers or that they have limited time to take part in surveys.



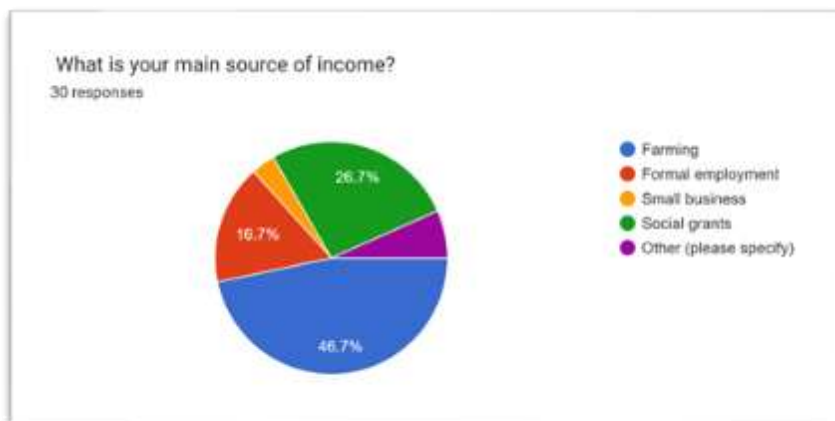
Among the respondents, 53.3% were women, 43.3% were men, and the remaining participants preferred not to disclose their gender. This data highlights that women play a leading role in small-scale farming activities at Allan Farm. Their significant participation suggests that women are not only actively involved in day-to-day farming operations but may also be driving innovation, management, and sustainability practices within the community. This trend reflects a

broader pattern of female empowerment in agriculture, where women increasingly contribute to food security, local economies, and the resilience of rural livelihoods



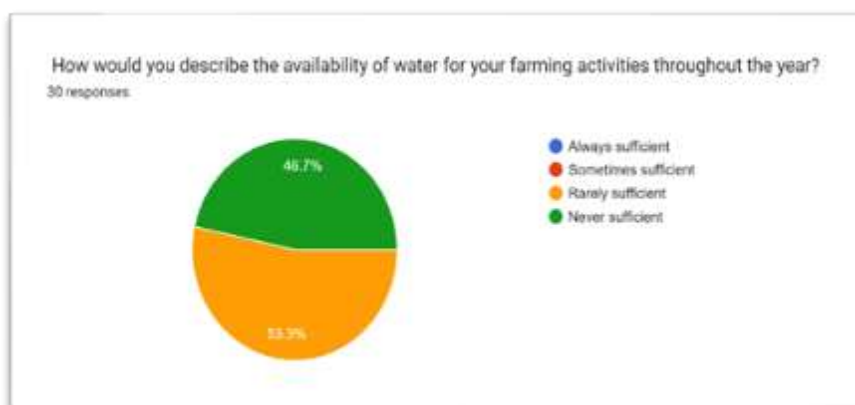
The age distribution of respondents shows that 36.7% are aged 30–39 years, 30% are aged 40–49 years, and 23.3% are aged 18–29 years. This suggests that young people are actively participating in agricultural initiatives, contributing to efforts to address KwaZulu-Natal’s high unemployment rate of 46.1%. Their involvement in farming reflects a willingness to pursue agriculture as a viable livelihood, develop

entrepreneurial skills, and strengthen local food security and economic resilience in the province.



The survey responses reveal that 50% of the community relies on farming as their primary source of income, underscoring the central role of agriculture in sustaining livelihoods at Allan Farm. Meanwhile, 29% of respondents depend on social grants, reflecting the importance of government support for households facing economic challenges. Only 18% of the community are engaged in

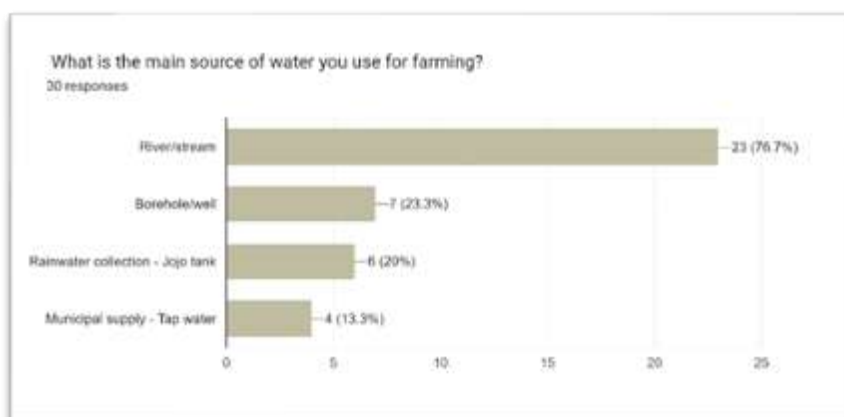
formal employment, and a small fraction, 3%, operate small businesses, indicating limited diversification of income sources. These findings suggest that while farming remains the backbone of the local economy.



Access to water

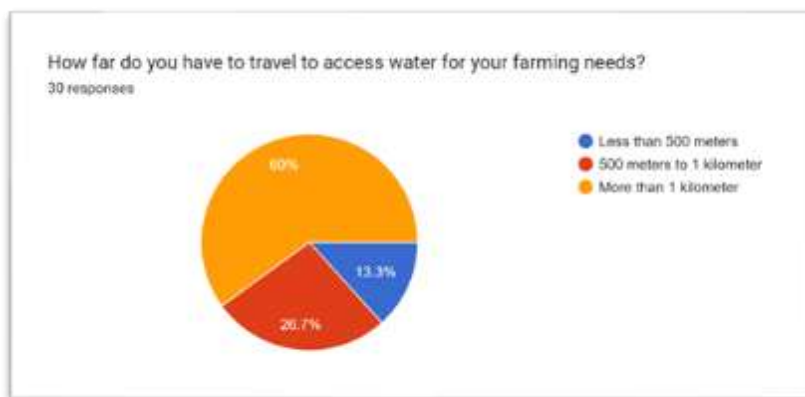
The survey revealed that 53.3% of respondents experience insufficient water availability for farming activities throughout the year. This scarcity significantly impacts daily agricultural operations, limiting crop production, livestock care, and overall farm productivity. The findings highlight the urgent need

for improved water management strategies and infrastructure to support sustainable farming and ensure the community can maintain consistent agricultural output despite seasonal or climatic challenges.



The survey indicates that, out of the respondents, 23 rely on streams and rivers as their primary water sources for farming. This reliance suggests that municipal water provision is inadequate, falling short of the requirements outlined in the Water Services Act. Moreover, the continued dependence on natural water sources points to a failure by local authorities to address water access

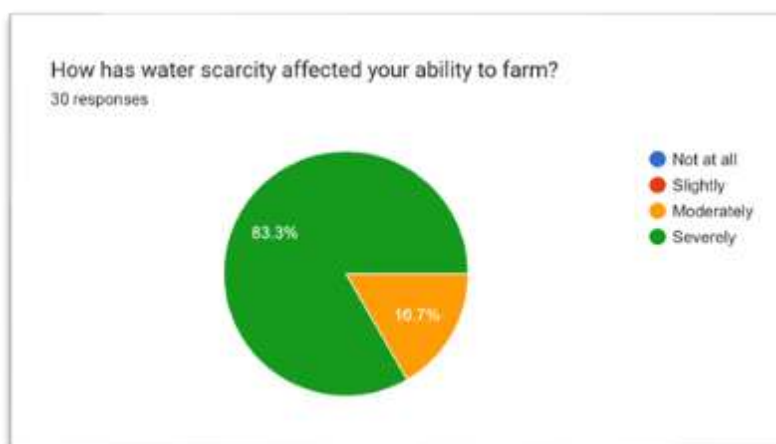
challenges during public meetings, leaving the community to manage their agricultural needs with limited support.



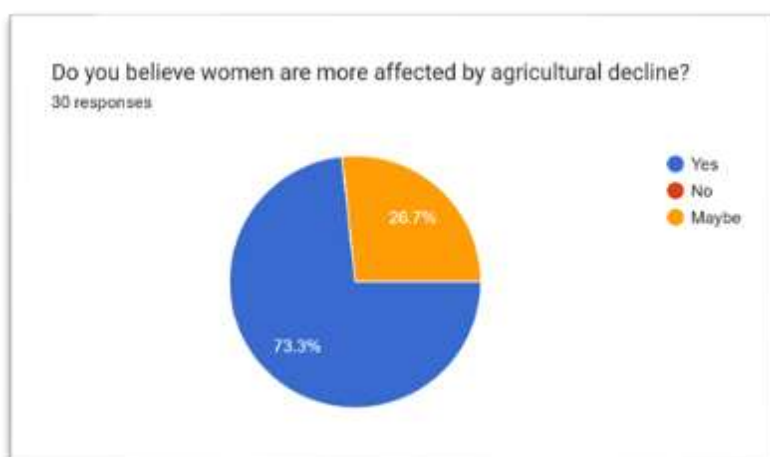
Many women involved in farming in Allan and surrounding communities are forced to travel long distances to access water for their agricultural activities. According to the survey, 60% of respondents travel more than one kilometer to fetch water, highlighting the daily challenges posed by the ongoing water crisis.

Meanwhile, residents in Newcastle CBD and Madadeni enjoy consistent

water supply from sources such as Dannhouser (Chelmsford Dam), underscoring the inequality in water access. Small-scale farmers in the area first began experiencing water shortages between 2009 and 2011, which gradually worsened over the years. The situation became particularly severe in 2019 during the COVID-19 pandemic, when movement restrictions and quarantine measures prevented farmers from collecting water in public spaces, further impacting agricultural productivity. Farmers in the community suspect that administrative delays and inefficiencies at municipal and village levels have contributed to prolonged water shortages, affecting livelihoods across the region.



Most respondents, 83.3% said that water scarcity has affected their ability to farm. Not having enough water makes it hard to plant crops, take care of vegetables, and look after animals. Farming becomes harder and takes more time, especially for women and young people who often fetch water. This leads to smaller harvests, less income, and difficulties in providing food for their families.



About 73.3% of respondents said they believe women are more affected by water scarcity. This is because women often have the responsibility of fetching water for farming and household use. When water is scarce, they have to travel longer distances and spend more time collecting it, which makes farming and daily chores much harder for them.

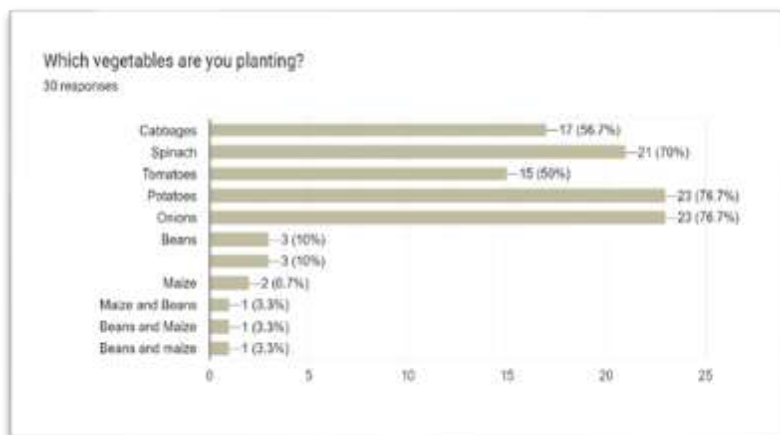


Photo1: Thandukwazi Dube, CMS monitor, demonstrating how to access underground water; it takes about an hour for the water level to rise

The water crisis is man-made from Amajuba district (Thukela water) because they want to open the window of water tankers tenders.

<https://newcastillian.com/2024/12/03/utrecht-and-dannhauser-water-supply-problems-reach-kzn-legislature-for-resolution/>

According to the Amajuba District Municipality, the R178 million water project—launched in January 2024—aims to provide emergency water supply to Ramaphosa Settlement and Skombaren, while building the 2 Mℓ Hilltop reservoir in two phases. Focused on Wards 2, 3, and 7 in Dannhauser, the initiative is set to benefit more than 10,000 households by December 2025.



Around 2021, some women continued farming to sustain their families in the wake of widespread job losses and increasing demand for healthy food. They primarily cultivated vegetables such as cabbages, spinach, tomatoes, potatoes, onions, and beans. These locally produced crops not only helped households meet their nutritional needs but also created opportunities for small businesses and community members to purchase fresh vegetables

directly from local farms at affordable prices. This demonstrates how women farmers played a critical role in ensuring food security and supporting the local economy during challenging times.

During the data collection, one of the Farmers shared:

“The mine damaged the beautiful stream that we used during times of water scarcity. Before the mine arrived, we had an abundance of water for our gardens and livestock. After the mine arrived, we started to experience a shortage of water because when the mine obtained its water use license (WUL), it diverted water from the river to its washing plant. We now have to wait for the municipal water tanker to provide us with water once a month.”

Most farmers recommended that the municipality provide regular clean water, so that they will continue producing food or farming to reduce poverty and hunger, and restore the agricultural land.

“We, the municipality, will visit all gardens around Allen Farm to address the issue of the sustainable food system and provide support such as seeds, tools, and training.” MEC Bongiwe Sthole-Moloi

The agriculture sector contributes approximately 4% to KwaZulu-Natal's gross domestic product (GDP). Despite women making up more than 51% of the province's population, the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development reported in 2017 that they owned only 13% of farms and agricultural land. This stark disparity highlights the systemic barriers women face in accessing land and resources, despite their active involvement in farming and their critical role in food production, household sustenance, and local economic development

4. What are the views of stakeholders on the issues?

KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development:

Dannhauser Municipality supports farmers through partnerships, especially with the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (KZNDARD), by facilitating planting season rollouts with tools and seedlings, promoting agricultural co-operatives and SMMEs, and assisting with access to funding, training, and markets for smallholder farmers. The municipality has also established a task team to address agricultural challenges and advocate for improved support, including engagement with external stakeholders like the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) and the District Municipality.

In efforts to assist farmers and disadvantaged communities to alleviate poverty and promote food security in the Province, the KwaZulu-Natal MEC for the Department of Health, Ms. Nomagugu Simelane and her counterpart MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mrs. Bongiwe Sithole-Moloi, held a planting season rollout in Dannhauser, Ward 4 under Amajuba District on 11 November 2022.

KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development MEC Bongiwe Sithole-Moloi reinforced the notion of people using agriculture to eradicate poverty and ensure food security. MEC Sithole-Moloi handed over farming implements and seedlings to farmers and community members to implement the "One Home, One Garden" Programme

Women in farming

The women in farming want to see themselves continue farming, produce healthy food, and sell it to the local market and in the community to reduce poverty and hunger. But they want to ensure that they have access to the land and clean water, and all equipment.

5. Advocacy approach and action

To help farmers improve their work, the first step is to test the soil and water with the Department of Agriculture. This helps farmers understand what their land and water can support, which crops will grow best, and how to take care of their farms.

Farming is not just about planting and harvesting it requires skills and knowledge. Farmers need to know how to keep the soil healthy, use water efficiently, control pests and diseases, and manage

their crops well. Many new or small-scale farmers face challenges because they do not have access to training, guidance, or experienced mentors who can teach them these important skills.

To address this, advocacy should focus on teaching and supporting farmers. This can include practical workshops, hands-on demonstrations, field visits, and mentorship programs. Farmers can also share knowledge with each other, creating a community of learning.

By giving farmers the right knowledge, tools, and support, they can grow more food, farm in a way that protects the land and water, and improve food security for their families and the community. This approach also encourages new farmers to stay in agriculture, helps small-scale farming become more productive, and supports the local economy.

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