

Linking smallholder agriculture and water to household food security and nutrition

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Abstract

Promoting household food security and reducing malnutrition rates of a growing population with the same amount of water is a challenge facing South African nutritionists and agriculturalists alike. Apart from non-food related effects of agriculture in general, the crop and livestock production practices of the South African smallholder farmer may have nutritional implications, primarily when practised on residential land and resulting in home consumption. Yet, few studies have systematically investigated the impact thereof. It appears that crop diversification, gender issues and nutrition education are among the important factors that strengthen the link between agriculture and nutrition. Since food production is the most water-intensive activity in society, nutritional water productivity (i.e. nutrition per volume water) of foods and the nutritional water footprint of diets should be investigated in order to achieve a sustainable solution. This implies that both the demand for a diet consisting predominantly of water-productive plant products, as well as the supply thereof, be addressed.

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