

Agri Benchmark beef and sheep

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Agri Benchmark beef and sheep local and international network

The Agri Benchmark initiative refers to international comparisons and benchmarking of productivity, costs and income pertaining to livestock production, especially beef and sheep. This concept can also be applied to South African conditions by establishing a local network for local comparisons and to feed the international model with up to date data for international comparisons.

The local comparisons can also be used to benchmark local farms with each other. The farms are selected according to specific regions and then calculated as typical farms. The modelling and analyses have various features that can be used by beef and sheep producers. The results within the model can be used for further sensitivity analyses and “what if” scenarios as well as a database to answer specific questions

The Agri Benchmark and UFS project comprises of beef and sheep networks where the aim was to establish a local beef and sheep network. This in turn could feed the international model for comparisons. In 2014, we started data collection for our local beef and sheep network. A total of 17 typical usable farms were included into the local network for comparisons for beef and sheep. In 2015, we had a number of strategic sessions with various roll player to discuss the way forward and how Agri Benchmark can contribute more within the agricultural sector.

It was concluded that there is a need for a local network for beef and sheep. In 2015, we will start with the local beef network to be comprehensive in South Africa. The local network plans to grow each year by 2 to 3 farms, so in due time a well-established network will be in place in South Africa. Benchmarking can play a tremendous role in developing farmers. Once the benchmarking process is started we can benchmark farmers on various productivity levels, this will show where the shortcomings or problems occur within the farming scenario. For example; If we are benchmarking two or more commercial and one of the farms returns in lower then, the other the investigation can start quick and easy. Is it in terms of cost structures, management etc., by this meaning; if there is a low lambing percentage what is

wrong? It can be above normal losses; more must be spent on animal medicine or problems with herd composition.

The inclusion of the “what if” scenarios contributed tremendously to the livestock industry, these scenarios include increases in farm level labour costs, increases in production cost and risks in livestock farming (drought, predation, changes in input and output prices). Agri Benchmark helped the livestock industry in obtaining reliable and relevant information and answers to burning questions within the livestock sector. All reports can be seen in the appendixes of this report

We would like to thank the RMRDT for helping us in achieving our goals and making a difference in South African agriculture. Agri benchmark still remains a project in the Unit of livestock Economics at the University of the Free State. We hope to submit future projects to the RMRDT as the networks grow over time.

To conclude; Agri benchmark is a diverse project with a large variety of outcomes as illustrated in the appendixes. Agriculture in South Africa will in the future become more challenging and Agri benchmark can help illuminate challenges by comparing farming business and running “what if” scenarios to improve agriculture in South Africa.