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Mechanism for improving the sustainability of homestead food gardens in Gauteng province, South Africa**Phokele Maponya¹, Du Plooy CP¹, Kekana MV¹, Manyaga C² and Nyirenda O²**¹Agricultural Research Council-Vegetable and Ornamental Plant, South Africa²Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, South Africa

The Homestead Food Garden Projects are one of the programs supported by government which attempts to alleviate poverty in food insecure households. Household survey was conducted in Gauteng province by the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) and Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (GDARD). The aim of the survey was to establish a sustainable mechanism for homestead food gardens. The objectives of this study is to identify socio-economic factors that influence sustainability of homestead gardens; to assess production practices of homestead gardens owners and to conduct natural resource audit. A total of 1085 households participated in the study and were spread as follows: City of Johannesburg (319); City of Tshwane (207); Ekurhuleni (141); Sedibeng (216) and West Rand (202). Quantitative and qualitative designs were used as a questionnaire written in English, stakeholder's discussion and field observations were part of the data collection. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 1085 households from the list provided by GDARD. Data was captured and analyzed using SPSS. The results indicated that most of the households were female headed, with majority falling above 56 years of age. The food security status (accessibility, availability and utilization) is also in line with the fact that South Africa is food insecure at a household level as compared to national level. It was also established that not all household on the department list are still gardening; some households in other districts or metropolitans felt that the household gardens initiative is very good, good, fair and poor. Majority of the households felt that the support given by the department is good as households received tools, seeds as starter packs. It was also established that in terms of sustainability, not all households gardens are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. A comprehensive sustainable mechanism for household gardening will thus be recommended to GDARD.

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