



planning, monitoring & evaluation

Department:
Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Report on the Assessment of Government Evaluations

Evaluation Title:	An Evaluation of the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP)
Evaluation Number:	405
Evaluation Completion Date:	01 September 2011
Period of Evaluation:	2010-2011
Submitted:	17 December 2013 by Robin Richards
Approved:	17 December 2013 by Mike Leslie

Evaluation Details

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Created:	07 November 2013 by Mike Leslie
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Period of Evaluation:	2010-2011
Known Cost:	R 1 500 000.00
Known Cost Type:	Estimate
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Initiated By Internal:	No
Undertaken By:	Public Service Commission
Undertaken By Internal:	No

Assessors

Robin Richards	robinr@netactive.co.za
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Assessment Documents

Document Name:	Document Type:	Added By:	Added On:
CASP Report FINAL APPROVED SEPTEMBER 2011.pdf	Evaluation report	Mike Leslie	07 November 2013
Project Proposal. CASP 2010.pdf	The proposal selected to conduct the evaluation	Robin Richards	02 December 2013
CASP instruments.2010.pdf	Assessment tools	Robin Richards	02 December 2013
Assessment Report at Moderation.pdf	Assessment Report at Moderation	Mike Leslie	06 December 2013

Quality Assessment Summary

The overarching quality-assessment score for this report was 3.26 out of a scale of 5 when applying the Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool (EQAT). This was an evaluation undertaken independently by the Public Service Commission (PSC) with cooperation of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) on the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) that is one of the programmes under the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP).

The final report on the evaluation was published by the PSC in 2011 and was of an adequate standard, conforming to accepted standards of a research report in terms of style of writing, use of tables and figures and consistent referencing. The evaluation methodology was thorough, comprising qualitative interviews with key stakeholders, reviewing government administrative records on the performance of CASP as well as site visits to projects in four provinces.

One of the important findings of the evaluation was that CASP lacks a clearly spelt out Programme Logic or Theory of Change. This should be developed so that programme outputs and linked outcomes can be tracked nationally to facilitate programme evaluation in future. For the purposes of this evaluation the researchers developed a matrix, mapping programme objectives and programme success factors. This was undertaken to facilitate the evaluation in the absence of a Theory of Change/Programme Logic. The key findings were supported by evidence presented, especially CASP administrative records relating for example to project outputs such as turn-around times and provincial budget expenditures. Interviews with key stakeholders assisted with the assessment of the success of the programme.

With respect to the Robustness of Findings, a limited number of beneficiary interviews were conducted and the evaluation report could have been strengthened with more detail on how interviewees were selected, how many beneficiaries there were per project and how many beneficiaries were interviewed per project selected. In addition, the findings from interviews with key stakeholders were presented in summary form, so that these findings had to be read at face value. More detail on what different stakeholder groups said about key questions asked, would have added an extra richness to the report.

The evaluation had a number of other weaknesses. These included project management /governance weaknesses, relating to the lack of proper consultation with DAFF on the implementation of the evaluation to secure real ownership of the evaluation findings. There were also difficulties reported in securing documentary evidence from DAFF on programme implementation. Had there been an evaluation Steering Committee (comprising all stakeholders) to facilitate the implementation of the evaluation, there may have been improved cooperation of DAFF officials in accessing key documents relating to programme performance as well as a greater sense of ownership of evaluation findings.

With respect to Evaluation Use, one of the main weaknesses of the evaluation was the lack of adequate dissemination of research findings to staff in CASP as well as the limited symbolic value of the evaluation due to it not receiving prominence in Parliamentary Committee Meetings as other PSC evaluations have. The findings of the report however have been published.

Finally, the evaluation findings have been used only to a limited extent because of changes in the focus of CASP resulting from leadership changes in DAFF and the limited capacity of CASP to implement recommendations.

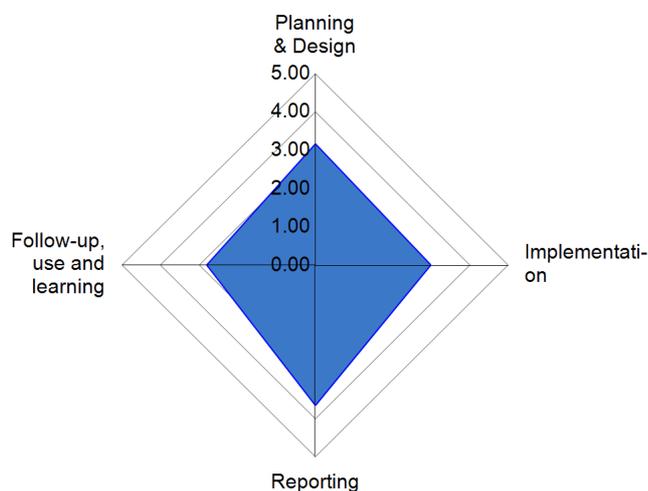
Quality Assessment Scores

Phase of Evaluation	Score
Planning & Design	3.16
Implementation	3.00
Reporting	3.66
Follow-up, use and learning	2.81
Total	3.26

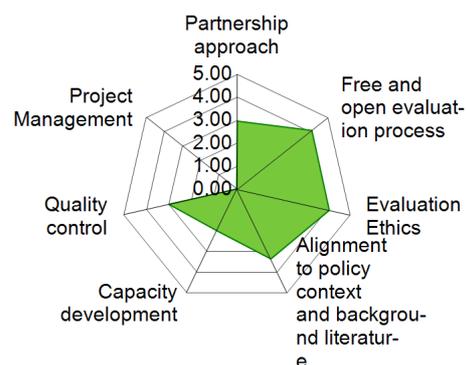
Overarching Consideration	Score
Partnership approach	2.97
Free and open evaluation process	4.11
Evaluation Ethics	4.07

Alignment to policy context and background literature	3.35
Capacity development	2.00
Quality control	3.00
Project Management	
Total	3.26

Scores: Phases of Evaluation



Scores: Overarching Considerations



Phase of Evaluation	Area of Evaluation	Score
Planning & Design	Quality of the TOR	3.71
Planning & Design	Adequacy of resourcing	2.00
Planning & Design	Alignment to policy context and background literature	3.40
Planning & Design	Appropriateness of the evaluation design and methodology	3.11
Planning & Design	Project management (Planning phase)	3.00
Implementation	Evaluation ethics and independence	4.00
Implementation	Participation and M&E skills development	1.90
Implementation	Methodological integrity	3.20
Implementation	Project management (Implementation phase)	2.00
Reporting	Completeness of the evaluation report	4.46
Reporting	Accessibility of content	4.27
Reporting	Robustness of findings	2.91
Reporting	Strength of conclusions	3.64
Reporting	Suitability of recommendations	3.31
Reporting	Acknowledgement of ethical considerations	3.38
Reporting	Project management (Reporting phase)	2.00
Follow-up, use and learning	Resource utilisation	2.40
Follow-up, use and learning	Evaluation use	2.94
Total	Total	3.26

Planning & Design

Quality of the TOR

Standard: The evaluation was guided by a well-structured and complete TOR or a well-structured and complete internal evaluation proposal (e.g. Background, Purpose, Evaluation Questions, Design & Methodology, Deliverables & Timeframes, Resource requirements, Intended Audience & Utilisation, etc).

Comment and Analysis: An internal evaluation proposal was developed by the Public Service Commission (PSC) for the purposes of the CASP evaluation. The internal evaluation proposal was well structured. It included a detailed description of the background to the CASP; objectives of the evaluation, expected output; methodology (including research questions); the scope of the evaluation and the timeframes for its completion; project risks and mitigation plans.

Rating: 4: The evaluation was guided by a well-structured and complete TOR or internal evaluation proposal of a good standard

Standard: The purpose of the evaluation stated in the TOR (or an internal evaluation proposal) was clear and e

Comment and Analysis: The purposes of the evaluation were clearly stated in the proposal under a heading 'Objectives'. These were the following: to evaluate whether the objectives of the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) have been achieved; to evaluate whether the programme design was appropriate in relation to CASP objectives; to evaluate whether the programme is being implemented effectively and efficiently.

Rating: 4: 4

Standard: The approach and type of evaluation was suited to the purpose and scope of the evaluation TOR (or an internal evaluation proposal)

Comment and Analysis: The type and approach of the evaluation described in the proposal was well suited to the scope of the evaluation because it utilised methodologies that explored immediate programme outputs; site visits to projects being funded by the programme as well as interviews with key stakeholders. In this way a process of triangulation of data collected was used to verify whether the programme was being implemented effectively and efficiently.

Rating: 4: The approach and type of the evaluation was well-suited to the purpose and scope of the evaluation TOR

Standard: The TOR (or an internal evaluation proposal) identified the intended users of the evaluation and their information needs

Comment and Analysis: This was not mentioned explicitly in the proposal. However the proposal does mention the findings of the evaluation would be discussed with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) the main as users of the evaluation.

Rating: 3: The TOR (or an internal evaluation proposal) identified the intended users of the evaluation and their information needs

Standard:	The evaluation questions in the TOR (or an internal evaluation proposal) were clearly stated and ap
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation proposal listed five research questions under a section outlining the methodology of the evaluation, viz: -Have objectives of the programme been translated into performance indicators; -Is the programme reaching targetted beneficiaries? -Are strategies to achieve the deliverables of the programme sufficient? -Were there any contextual factors affecting the success of the programme? -Was the programme offering value for money?
Rating:	4: 4

Standard:	Key stakeholders were involved in the scoping of the TOR and choosing the purpose of the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	The proposal was written by the PSC, but inputs were provided by DAFF on the proposal, thereby helping to define the purpose and scope of the evaluation.
Rating:	3: Key stakeholders were involved in the scoping of the TOR and choosing the purpose of the evaluation

Adequacy of resourcing

Standard:	The evaluation was adequately resourced in terms of time and budget allocated
Comment and Analysis:	The official interviewed in the PSC indicated that deadlines for the evaluation were not met, suggesting that the evaluation was not adequately resourced in terms of time allocated to it.
Rating:	2: The evaluation was resourced with tight timeframes and budget which were challenging from the outset

Standard:	The evaluation was adequately resourced in terms of original budget
Comment and Analysis:	The official interviewed in the PSC indicated that resources were not adequate. It would appear that inexperienced officials were utilised to undertake the research, suggesting that budgetting was not sufficient.
Rating:	2: 2

Standard:	The team conducting the evaluation was adequately resourced in terms of staffing and skills sets
Comment and Analysis:	The official interviewed in the PSC noted that the organisation tackles ambitious evaluations but utilises relatively inexperienced researchers to undertake the evaluations.
Rating:	2: The evaluation was under-staffed or lacked some skills sets appropriate for the type and sector of the evaluation

Standard:	Where appropriate, the evaluation planned to incorporate an element of capacity building of partners
Comment and Analysis:	The official interviewed in the PSC indicated that relatively inexperienced staff are utilised for the evaluation. Because they are "thrown in the deepend", they learn a lot whilst working on the evaluation. Therefore, informal capacity building occurred particularly amongst PSC staff. CASP staff were not included in any capacity building (formally planned or informal) in respect of the implementation of this evaluation.
Rating:	2: 2

Alignment to policy context and background literature

Standard:	There was evidence that a review of the relevant policy and programme environments had been conducted
Comment and Analysis:	The review of literature included: a summary of strategic interventions in the agricultural sector since the 1980's (for example summaries of Land Reform Programmes); summaries of important policies and pieces of legislation (such as the White Paper on Agriculture, 1995 and the Land Restitution Act, 1994). The review also covered landmark commissions (such as the Strauss Commission, 1996) and other policy documents (such as the Agricultural Sector plan, 1995) and the implementation of land reform plans for the agricultural sector .
Rating:	4: 4

Standard:	There was evidence of a review of appropriate literature having been conducted and used in planning
Comment and Analysis:	The interview with the official at the PSC indicated that it was necessary to firstly understand the programme and to identify key issues affecting the success of the programme. Therefore a review of relevant departmental policy material appears to have been undertaken.
Rating:	3: 3

Appropriateness of the evaluation design and methodology

Standard:	There was explicit reference to the intervention logic or the theory of change of the evaluand in the planning of the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	There was no specific reference to an Intervention Logic or Theory of Change in the planning of the evaluation.
Rating:	1: There was no reference to the intervention logic or the theory of change in the TOR or the Inception Report

Standard:	Key stakeholders were consulted on the design and methodology of the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	Interviews with the Public Service Commission revealed that the PSC convened meetings with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (DAFF) to draft the Terms of Reference for the evaluation and also in the planning of the methodology of the evaluation.
Rating:	4: 4

Standard:	The planned methodology was appropriate to the questions being asked
Comment and Analysis:	The method was appropriate to the questions being asked because it focussed on programme implementation outputs rather than outcomes and impacts. The method therefore included the collection and assessment of government administrative records on the programme; site observations and interviews with programme officials and beneficiaries.
Rating:	4: The planned methodology was well suited to the questions being asked and considered the data available

Standard: The sampling planned was appropriate and adequate given the focus and purpose of evaluation

Comment and Analysis: This evaluation had a qualitative focus. In the description of the methodology for the evaluation in the final report, the authors make no mention of a sampling strategy with respect to the selection of key informants. Provinces selected for the study were restricted to 4 due to budget limitations. Nine projects were selected per province for investigation. The selection of the provinces was based on two provinces that were doing well and two provinces that were doing badly in terms of spending annual budgets on programme activities. The selection of projects was undertaken with the assistance of departmental officials and was based on projects that were 'struggling' versus those that were 'successful'. The CASP Manager interviewed was of the opinion that if other provinces had been sampled the evaluation results may have been different. She conceded however that she was not a sampling expert and could not say definitively whether the sample was sufficient. Nevertheless, it appeared that the evaluation's purpose was rather to highlight implementation and service delivery challenges and successes and reasons for these so that the programme could be adjusted to improve the situation if this was required. Therefore emphasis was placed on highlighting these factors (using a case-study approach) in the scoping of the project rather than to achieve a sample that was representative of all provinces where CASP was operating.

Rating: 3: The sampling planned was appropriate and adequate given focus and purpose of evaluation

Standard: There was a planned process for using the findings of the evaluation

Comment and Analysis: The proposal for the evaluation outlines some basic steps for the utilisation of the findings by DAFF. These include: a discussion of the report with the Department of agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and incorporation of their inputs into the report.

Rating: 3: 3

Project management (Planning phase)

Standard: The inception phase was used to develop a common agreement on how the evaluation would be implemented

Comment and Analysis: It was indicated that various inception meetings were held before and after the Terms of Reference of the evaluation were developed. This suggested that there were efforts to reach a common agreement between DAFF and the PSC as to how the evaluation would be implemented.

Rating: 3: The inception phase was used to develop a common agreement on how the evaluation would be implemented

Implementation

Evaluation ethics and independence

Standard: Where data was gathered in contexts where ethical sensitivity is high, informed consent, assurances of confidentiality and appropriate clearance were achieved; e.g. through an ethics review board, in evaluation involving minors, institutions where access usually requires ethical or bureaucratic clearance

Comment and Analysis: The data was not gathered in contexts where ethical sensitivity was high.

Rating: : N/A

Standard: Where external, the evaluation team was able to work without significant interference and given access to existing data and information sources

Comment and Analysis: This was not mentioned as a specific challenge by the official interviewed in the PSC. The CASP Project Manager interviewed pointed out that DAFF officials cooperated fully with the PSC to implement the evaluation efficiently and that this was one of the success areas of the evaluation.

Rating: 4: The evaluation team was able to work freely without interference and was given access to all sought data and information sources

Standard: The evaluation team was impartial and there was no evidence of conflict of interest

Comment and Analysis: This was an evaluation undertaken by the PSC as an agency within government. The evaluation was meant to support the CASP programme by facilitating the improvement of the performance of CASP as a significant programme falling within the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme. Therefore the evaluation was undertaken to identify possible weaknesses with the implementation of CASP and to highlight success areas. Against this backdrop, the evaluation could be viewed as impartial.

Rating: 4: 4

Participation and M&E skills development

Standard: Key stakeholders were involved in the evaluation through a formalised mechanism or institutional arrangement

Comment and Analysis: According to the CASP Programme Manager, there was no formalised mechanism such as a Steering Committee. The PSC initiated the evaluation by writing a letter to DAFF indicating their intention to evaluate CASP and asking DAFF to assist PSC in facilitating the implementation of the evaluation. A meeting with the PSC was subsequently held and the CASP officials assisted with the identification of the provinces and the officials in each province that should be interviewed.

Rating: 2: There was evidence that key stakeholders were consulted either indirectly or informally outside of an institutional arrangement

Standard: Where appropriate, an element of capacity building of partners responsible for the evaluand and evaluators was incorporated into the evaluation process

Comment and Analysis: This was not formally done. However the PSC official interviewed noted this happened at an informal level with DAFF officials whilst the evaluation was being implemented. However the CASP Project Manager was of the opinion that DAFF officials were largely uninvolved in the evaluation.

Rating: 1: There was no evidence of any capacity building of partners responsible for the evaluand or evaluators being incorporated into the evaluation process

Methodological integrity

Standard:	The methods employed in the process of the evaluation were consistent with those planned
Comment and Analysis:	A comparison of the methods outlined in the proposal for the evaluation with those methods outlined in the final report, indicated this to be the case.
Rating:	4: 4
Standard:	The methods employed in the process of the evaluation were consistent with those planned and implemented adequately
Comment and Analysis:	Data gathering comprised scanning archival and other documentary sources; analysis of programme and project administrative records, site observations and interviews. These methods were sufficient to investigate project outputs focussing on implementation indicators such as number of beneficiaries affected, training received and type of training, project marketing, access to finance and project implementation turn-around times.
Rating:	4: The methods employed in the process of the evaluation were consistent with those planned and implemented well (in terms of time, coverage, and content)
Standard:	A pilot of basic data collection instrumentation occurred prior to undertaking data collection and it was used to inform the research process
Comment and Analysis:	Data analysis methods and approach appeared to be appropriate and sufficient for the purposes of the evaluation. The PSC noted that because CASP does not have a programme logic framework/theory of change, a matrix had to be developed. The matrix assisted with the evaluation and analysis of data collected by indicating the objectives of the evaluation and the programme success factors. Programme success factors were measured against the 6 pillars underpinning the programme: the provision of farm infrastructure, technical and advisory assistance, information and knowledge management, training and capacity-building, marketing and business development and financial support. The evaluation methods and analysis therefore focussed on indicators dealing with implementation of the programme as well as measures of success in terms of achieving programme objectives, rather than programme outputs in the absence of theory of change guiding the programme. The analysis of existing programme-records; and data from interviews with programme officials and beneficiaries therefore was sufficient given the purposes of the evaluation.
Rating:	4: All components of the data collection instrumentation were piloted which led to some improvements in the data collection instrumentation or affirmation of the instruments
Standard:	Data collection was not compromised by fieldwork-level problems or unplanned diversions from origina
Comment and Analysis:	Data collection had been compromised by fieldwork level problems. Officials in DAFF reportedly had to be continuously pursued and followed up in order to access information about the programme. This reduced the value of the evaluation because data was lacking on benefits of the programme and progress with project implementation.
Rating:	2: 2

Standard:	Data was collected from key stakeholders (e.g. implementers, governance structures, indirectly affected stakeholders) as data sources
Comment and Analysis:	The Executive Summary covers all of the key components and summarises the objectives, methodology and scope of the study. Key findings and recommendations are also included.
Rating:	4: Data was collected from the intended key stakeholder groupings in line with the envisioned range and type of stakeholders (approx. 80-89% of intended)

Standard:	The methodology included engaging beneficiaries appropriately as a key source of data and information
Comment and Analysis:	The context of the development intervention and the evaluation is clearly articulated. The evaluation report notes that CASP is linked to one of government's priority areas, namely Food Security and Agrarian Reform and is an important part of the Integrated Rural Development Strategy (CRDS). The evaluation sought to strengthen the programme implementation and to contribute to the achievement of one of government's key priority areas .
Rating:	4: The methodology included meaningfully engaging beneficiaries as a primary source of data and information (or if based on secondary data, includes data from beneficiaries and beneficiaries consulted on emerging findings)

Standard:	Key stakeholders were significantly engaged as part of the methodology
Comment and Analysis:	The final evaluation report describes in detail the consultative process in undertaking the evaluation as well as the nurturing of partnerships with the department responsible for the programme. Ministerial and Director-General approval within DAFF as well as their provincial counterparts in the targetted provinces were firstly obtained for the evaluation. Programme staff were engaged with to obtain a proper understanding of the programme. Meetings were also held with provincial programme managers to collect information about projects and beneficiaries at provincial level and also to understand how the programme is managed at provincial level. Interviews and meetings were also held with beneficiaries.
Rating:	4: 4

Standard:	The methodology included engaging beneficiaries appropriately as a key source of data and informatio
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation report specifies that project site-visits were undertaken in each of the provinces selected for the evaluation. During site visits, various stakeholders were interviewed, including beneficiaries, programme and project managers as well as members of projects. Appendix C of the published report provides a consolidated overview of interviews undertaken at site visits. However, it appears that beneficiary interviews were limited. Some projects had a large number of beneficiaries, in some cases between 30 and 60. The limited number of beneficiary interviews (between 1 and 3 per project), may throw some doubt as to whether beneficiaries views were adequately covered in the evaluation.
Rating:	3: 3

Project management (Implementation phase)

Standard:	The evaluation was conducted without significant shifts to scheduled project milestones and timefram
Comment and Analysis:	The official interviewed reported that evaluation deadlines were not met.
Rating:	2: 2

Standard:	The steering committee, technical working group and service provider worked together adequately to facilitate achievement of the objectives of the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	A clear rationale was provided. The report outlines the process of developing the evaluation questions, viz: clarifying the goals of the programme; identifying key stakeholders; listing and prioritising key evaluation questions based on the stakeholder level of interest of these questions and determining which questions can be asked based on resources available to the evaluation. The evaluation questions were designed to elicit answers to broader issues relating to the success of the programme in terms of achieving its objectives and the implementation of the 6 pillars of the programme.
Rating:	4: The steering committee, technical working group and service provider worked together in a flexible and constructive manner facilitating achievement of the objectives of the evaluation

Reporting

Completeness of the evaluation report

Standard:	The scope or focus of the evaluation is apparent in the report
Comment and Analysis:	A section of the report specifically focusses on the scope of the evaluation and describes the geographic-provincial scope as well as the number of projects sampled per province.
Rating:	5: 5

Standard:	A detailed methodology is outlined in the relevant section of the report to the point that a reader
Comment and Analysis:	There is a high degree of detail provided in the methodology section of the evaluation report. The report explains that in the absence of a programme Theory of Change, a matrix had to be developed to establish the objectives of the evaluation and the success-factors of the programme, against which the programme could be assessed. The methodology also describes in detail the methods used to collect the data to measure the success of the programme.
Rating:	5: 5

Standard:	Acknowledgement of limitations of all aspects of the methodology and findings are clearly and succinct
Comment and Analysis:	The report devotes a section to the limitations of the study. These being the challenges in accessing administrative records from the departments, as well as obtaining quantitative data from the provinces and the public sector strike that affected fieldwork data collection.
Rating:	4: 4

Standard:	Key findings are presented in a clear way; they are made distinct from uncertain or speculative find
Comment and Analysis:	Findings are presented in a logical and clear manner. A chapter of the report is devoted to each province in terms of the status of CASP. Findings relating to progress in implementing each of the six pillars of the CASP are described within each of the provincial chapters.
Rating:	5: 5

Standard:	Conclusions and recommendations are clear and succinctly articulated
Comment and Analysis:	The conclusions are succinctly articulated in terms of whether the 3 objectives of the study have been achieved, viz. whether the objectives of CASP have been achieved; whether the programme design is appropriate and to assess if the programme has been implemented effectively. Recommendations are based on a distillation of the key weaknesses of the programme and provide strategies to deal with these weaknesses.
Rating:	4: 4

Accessibility of content

Standard: The final evaluation report is user-friendly, written in accessible language and adequate for publication (e.g. adequate layout and consistent formatting; complete sentences and no widespread grammatical or typographical errors; consistency of style and writing conventions; levels of formality; references complete and consistent with cited references in reference list and vice versa; etc.)

Comment and Analysis: The data that was presented in the form of administrative records from provincial departments is descriptive. Therefore there was little scope for data-analysis of these records. Findings from interviews with government officials and beneficiaries was synthesised and presented in aggregate form and therefore it was difficult to assess from the report how rigorous the data analysis of interviews undertaken was.

Rating: 3: The final evaluation report is user-friendly, written in accessible language and adequate for sharing (e.g. some spelling, grammar or formatting mistakes but these do not seriously detract from the report)

Standard: The final evaluation report is user-friendly, written in accessible language and its content follows

Comment and Analysis: The final evaluation report was published by the PSC in 2011. It is professionally written in plain English, making it user friendly and easy to understand. The flow of the report is logical and the reasons for the structure of the report are outlined in the beginning, making it easy for the reader to follow the logic of the report.

Rating: 5: 5

Standard: Figures, tables and appropriate conventions are used in presentation of data (e.g. use of appropriate statistical language; reporting of p-values where appropriate; not reporting statistically insignificant findings as significant; clarifying disaggregation categories in constructing percentages; not using quantitative language in reporting qualitative data, etc.) and are readily discernible to a reader familiar with data presentation conventions

Comment and Analysis: Evidence gathered and presented in the report, mainly from provincial administrative records has been appropriately analysed to support the argument. However, findings from interviews with stakeholders are presented in synthesised/agregate form. Therefore there was no evidence of a range of opinions that may have been expressed about a specific issue. The report also does not specify the total number of beneficiaries interviewed or indicate the total number of beneficiaries for each of the projects investigated. The reader therefore must take at face-value the interpretation of the evidence that is presented.

Rating: 3: Figures, tables and appropriate conventions are used in presentation of data and are readily discernible to a reader familiar with data presentation conventions

Standard: Quality of writing and presentation is adequate for publication including: adequate layout and consi

Comment and Analysis: The final report is of high quality and has already been published by the PSC in 2011. The layout and format is consistent and the report contains very few typographical errors. The report is written in an appropriate scientific style and level of formality. References are complete and consistent with cited references in the reference list.

Rating: 5: 5

Standard:	Appropriate conventions are used in presentation of data (e.g. use of appropriate statistical language)
Comment and Analysis:	Although some quantitative data was presented in the report, these were tables based on data extracted from the administrative records of provincial departments, rather than data from survey findings. Therefore this standard does not apply to the report.
Rating:	3: 3

Standard:	The use of figures and tables is such that it supports communication and comprehension of results; a
Comment and Analysis:	Figures and tables are used throughout the report to support the understanding of the methodology for the study as well as its findings. Tables and figures are not complex and enable the reader to quickly understand the status of CASP in each of the provinces. For example particularly with respect to utilisation of provincial programme budgets; and project turnaround times.
Rating:	4: 4

Robustness of findings

Standard:	Data analysis appears to have been executed to an adequate standard
Comment and Analysis:	The report bases its findings in part on a limited number of beneficiary interviews and the report does not consistently indicate how many beneficiaries there on each project. However it appears that no attempt was made to interview a representative sample of beneficiaries per project. Rather the number of beneficiaries interviewed may have been determined by the accessibility of informants as well as a limited budget for the evaluation. There is no recognition of the weakness of this approach in the report. This aspect undermined the methodology of the evaluation and also the analysis. The analysis should have included the possibility of alternative views being expressed about projects, had more beneficiaries been interviewed.
Rating:	3: Data analysis appears to have been executed to an adequate standard for most datasets

Standard:	Findings are supported by available evidence
Comment and Analysis:	Tables are presented throughout the report to support findings on progress with the 6 pillars of the programme. Interviews with project stakeholders are also utilised to support programme findings.
Rating:	4: 4

Standard:	Findings are supported by evidence which is sufficiently and appropriately analysed to support the argument, integrating sources of data
Comment and Analysis:	There does not appear to be any evidence of this in the Final Report.
Rating:	2: The evidence gathered has been analysed to support the argument to an extent but this is not entirely sufficient or appropriate, and different data sources may be presented separately rather than integrated

Standard:	There is appropriate recognition and exploration of the possibility of alternative interpretations
Comment and Analysis:	The Conclusions do address the original research questions or objectives of the evaluation, viz:whether the objectives ofthe programme are being achieved; an assessment of the suitability of the design of the programme to meet the objectives; an evaluation of whether the programme is being carried out efficiently and effectively.
Rating:	5: Alternative interpretations of data are presented and their validity is convincingly dispelled through critical analysis

Standard:	The report appears free of significant methodological and analytic flaws
Comment and Analysis:	The conclusion only makes reference to the fact that the programme itself has no explicit Theory of Change. In the Foreword of the report, the reasons for the evaluation are indicated, viz. to support performance of the programme and contribute to better decision making. However these reasons are not repeated, as an Intervention logic, in the conclusions to the report.
Rating:	3: The report appears free of significant methodological and analytic flaws

Standard:	There is appropriate recognition of the possibility of alternative interpretations
Comment and Analysis:	There does not appear to be any recognition of the possibility of alternative interpretations of findings in the report.
Rating:	2: 2

Standard:	Limitations of all aspects of the methodology and findings are clearly articulated (e.g. limitations of scope or evaluation design, recommendation for additional research, data collection challenges, etc)
Comment and Analysis:	The PSC official that was interviewed noted that the stakeholders provided inputs on the draft report,including the recommendations. However, he also noted that not enough time was spent on the development of solutions, so that recommendations were somewhat of a more general nature.
Rating:	3: Limitations of all aspects of the methodology and findings are articulated

Strength of conclusions

Standard:	Conclusions are derived from evidence
Comment and Analysis:	There was reportedly some input from stakeholders (DAFF), and input included suggestions on the programme recommendations.
Rating:	3: Conclusions are derived from evidence

Standard:	Conclusions are derived from evidence
Comment and Analysis:	The conclusions are concise and draw upon the evidence presented in the report with respect to the immediate outputs of the project. With respect to the design of the programme and the 6 pillars to support the programme, the report explains why each of the pillars is important and therefore draws on programme information to suggest that the design of the programme is appropriate eventhough the programme has no explicitly stated Theory of Change. Finally, with the respect to whether the programme has been implemented efficiently and effectively, provincial evidence presented highlights the importance of institutional infrastructure to achieve this and concludes that this has largely been the case especially in relation to immediate deliverables such as the provision of farm infrastructure to support development.
Rating:	4: 4

Standard:	Conclusions address the original evaluation purpose and questions
Comment and Analysis:	The Recommendations appear to be acceptable, affordable and feasible and are targeted at Programme Managers as well as project managers. The Recommendations in the main indicate the need to strengthen existing structures already in place such as the need to more closely monitor the work of Extension Officers. Therefore recommendations suggested are practically implementable. However, because of the more general nature of the recommendations, specific provincial recommendations were not provided on how to improve the implementation of the programme, where provincial weaknesses or differences occurred.
Rating:	3: Conclusions adequately address the original evaluation purpose and questions

Standard:	Conclusions are drawn with explicit reference to the intervention logic or theory of change
Comment and Analysis:	It would have been preferable had the evaluation report provided reasons for the limited number of beneficiary interviews in the section on limitations of the evaluation. This is because beneficiaries are a key stakeholder group that the programme focusses on. An absence of a fuller analysis of their views could be seen a key limitation of the study that should have been reflected in the report. However if there were valid reasons for the limited number of beneficiary interviews, these should also have been highlighted.
Rating:	2: Conclusions make implicit or indirect reference to the intervention logic or theory of change

Suitability of recommendations

Standard:	Recommendations are made in consultation with relevant government officials, stakeholders and sectoral experts
Comment and Analysis:	There was no documentation of procedures to ensure confidentiality. However, because of the type of evaluation, this did not seem to be necessary.
Rating:	2: Recommendations are made with indirect or partial consultation of government officials, stakeholders and sectoral experts

Standard:	Recommendations are useful- they are relevant, specific, feasible, affordable and acceptable
Comment and Analysis:	According to the PSC official interviewed, this was not the case because very few presentations of the findings were made to stakeholders. Only one was reported. The CASP Project Manager noted that the report was submitted to an Oversight Committee only. This is a departmental committee comprising Directors General and Deputy Directors General.
Rating:	2: Recommendations are of limited use - they vary in the degree to which they are relevant, specific, feasible affordable and acceptable

Standard:	Recommendations are relevant to the current policy context
Comment and Analysis:	Recommendations are relevant to the current policy context because they relate to the need to strengthen institutional architecture to support the programme (for example improving the quality of performance information) as well as the need to develop an explicit Theory of Change and Programme Logic against which to track the progress of the programme with respect to broader outcomes.
Rating:	4: 4

Acknowledgement of ethical considerations

Standard:	The full report documents procedures intended to ensure confidentiality and to secure informed consent where necessary (in some cases this is not needed - e.g. evaluation synthesis - in which case N/A should be recorded)
Comment and Analysis:	This was a self-initiated PSC evaluation where a budget limit was set. However, neither the PSC official nor the CASP respondent interviewed, was able to provide a definitive answer on this. The PSC official indicated that the evaluation scope was limited by the funds available. Therefore it is assumed that it was completed without any additional budget left.
Rating:	3: The full report documents some procedures intended to ensure confidentiality and to secure informed consent where necessary

Standard:	Peer review of the draft evaluation report occurred prior to finalisation of the evaluation report
Comment and Analysis:	There was reportedly no peer-review of the report before finalisation.
Rating:	1: 1

Standard:	There are no risks to participants or institutions in disseminating the evaluation report on a public website
Comment and Analysis:	The report is a published document, released by the PSC in 2011.
Rating:	5: All participants and institutions to the evaluation were formally informed that the original report would be disseminated on a public website and no risks exist

Standard:	There are no risks to participants in disseminating the original report on a public website
Comment and Analysis:	The report has already been published by the PSC.
Rating:	5: 5

Standard:	There are no unfair risks to institutions in disseminating the original report on a public website
Comment and Analysis:	The Final Report has already been published by the PSC in 2011. Therefore there are no unfair risks to institutions.
Rating:	5: 5

Project management (Reporting phase)

Standard:	A project closure meeting that reflected on the challenges and strengths of the evaluation process
Comment and Analysis:	There was an internal (PSC) assessment on what could have been done better in the evaluation. For example, there was a recognition that more time could have been given for the evaluation due to difficulties with accessing information from public officials.
Rating:	2: 2

Follow-up, use and learning

Resource utilisation

Standard:	The evaluation was completed within the planned timeframes
Comment and Analysis:	According to an official interviewed in the PSC, the evaluation was not completed within the planned timeframes.
Rating:	2: 2

Standard:	The evaluation was completed within the planned timeframes and budget
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation is of conceptual value in understanding what has happened and shaping policy and practice in the future because it highlighted the need for the programme to formulate and finalise a Programme Logic/Theory of change against which outcomes can be tracked. The evaluation also indicated weaknesses and how these could be overcome.
Rating:	4: The evaluation was completed within the planned timeframes and budget and allowed for additional value to be achieved

Evaluation use

Standard:	Results of the evaluation have been presented to relevant stakeholders
Comment and Analysis:	The picture provided by the CASP Project Manager is mixed. As reported above, the evaluation resulted in revisions to the Standard Operating Procedures of CASP. However, because of a shortage of capacity (staff) within CASP it appears that practical changes to CASP implementation have been limited or delayed (reported above). The Project Manager noted that they had largely missed that opportunity created through the evaluation, to make changes because of these shortages and also because events had overtaken them in the meanwhile. Those events were alluded to above, including a change in the focus of the programme due to leadership changes.
Rating:	2: Results of the evaluation have been presented to stakeholders involved in the management of the evaluation project only but not more broadly

Standard:	A reflective process has been undertaken by the steering committee with the service provider (if no steering committee exists then by the evaluation management team or the involved department officials) to reflect on what could be done to strengthen future evaluations
Comment and Analysis:	An official interviewed in the PSC indicated that there had been some skills development as less experienced officials in the PSC had been utilised to do work on the evaluation. These officials had improved their evaluation skills as a result of this work. However skills development did not appear to be formally structured.
Rating:	3: A reflective process has been undertaken by the steering committee with the service provider to reflect on what could be done to strengthen future evaluations

Standard:	A reflective process has been undertaken by the steering committee (if no steering committee exists)
Comment and Analysis:	The reflective process was internal within the PSC rather than other stakeholders and it was agreed in future that more emphasis should be placed on recommendations and the follow-through on the implementation of these recommendations by the affected department.
Rating:	3: 3
Standard:	The evaluation study is seen by interviewed stakeholders as having added significant symbolic value
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation was viewed as having limited symbolic value because the findings were not given the prominence other evaluations had received in the past. For example the findings were not presented at any Parliamentary Portfolio Committee meetings, such as Agriculture. This has happened with previous evaluations.
Rating:	2: 2
Standard:	The evaluation study is seen by interviewed stakeholders as having added significant symbolic value to the policy or programme (e.g. raised its profile)
Comment and Analysis:	This was a self-initiated evaluation undertaken by the PSC. There did not appear to be any peer-review process on the evaluation design and methodology before the evaluation was undertaken. This was not indicated in the proposal for the study or the final evaluation report.
Rating:	2: The evaluation study is seen by interviewed stakeholders as being of limited symbolic value to the policy or programme
Standard:	The evaluation study is of conceptual value in understanding what has happened and possibly in shaping future policy and practice
Comment and Analysis:	The official in the PSC indicated that there had been no piloting of the instruments.
Rating:	1: The evaluation study is not of conceptual value in understanding what has happened and shaping policy and practice
Standard:	Development of a draft improvement plan has been started, but not completed, based on the findings a
Comment and Analysis:	This is unknown. However the PSC noted that some of the recommendations suggested in the report were already being implemented by the Department even before the evaluation findings had been released.
Rating:	: N/A

Standard:	There is clear evidence of instrumental use - that the recommendations of the evaluation were implem
Comment and Analysis:	<p>There was no clear evidence of this. However the official from the PSC noted that the department had already begun implementing some of the recommendations following the evaluation. The CASP Project Manager noted that recommendations have been implemented to a limited extent. For example, the manager, together with Treasury, have worked on the Standard Operating Procedures for CASP, to facilitate a standardised way of implementing CASP across all provinces. However she also noted that the Department had missed the opportunity to change policy resulting from the evaluation because of a lack of capacity at national level in CASP to properly take up findings and recommendations. Because of staff shortages, the ability of the programme to implement recommendations to improve the programme had been affected. Staff shortages mean that "you delay whatever can be delayed" for as long as possible because of a lack of capacity to properly implement recommendations on policy changes to the programme. Another issue she highlighted were interim changes to the programme even before the findings of the evaluation were released. For example when the evaluation was commissioned, CASP had a focus on small farmer support including input support. However even before the evaluation was completed the focus of CASP had changed to hunger and food security. This was because there had been political and leadership changes in the department and consequent policy shifts.</p>
Rating:	3: 3

References

Public Service Commission, September 2011. An Evaluation of the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme. Government Printers

Public Service Commission (PSC). 2011 Appendices: Appendix B1 and B2 Programme Evaluation Success Factors; CASP Beneficiary Questionnaire

Public Service Commission (PSC). 2011 Appendices: Appendix B1 and B2 Programme Evaluation Success Factors; CASP Beneficiary Questionnaire

Public Service Commission, April 2010. Project Proposal

List of Interviewees

Kobus van der Merwe, Chief Director Governance Monitoring, Public Service Commission. 29 November 2013 and 5 December 2013

Elder Mtshiza, National Programme Manager, Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP), Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. 11 December 2013