PERCEPTIONS OF SMALLHOLDER SUGARCANE GROWERS ON THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH MILLERS IN SWAZILAND

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of smallholder cane growers on their exchange relationship with millers in the Swaziland sugar industry. The study used purposive sampling, which is most desirable when certain important segments of the target population are intentionally represented in the sample. Data were collected from 124 smallholder cane growers who have already supplied millers with their sugarcane. Personal interviews were conducted to solicit the required data. The results revealed that, though most of the smallholder sugarcane growers are committed (96%), certain (98.4%), and satisfied with their relationship with millers (62.5%), they perceive an act of opportunistic behaviour (66%) and poor cooperation by miller (72%). The satisfaction of the farmers is likely to be attributed to the economic returns form selling sugarcane compared to what they would get from other crops, but not on the behaviour of the millers as exchange partners. The study concluded that a relationship founded on trust and mutual respect is more likely to succeed than a relationship of convenience. This is important for mutual benefit and quality relationship. The findings of the study imply that, in order to improve the relationship between smallholder farmers and millers, there is need for both parties to be honest and fair in their dealings and they should resist temptations of opportunistic behaviour.

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