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# Agritourism in Southern Africa: a policy analysis

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Over the years agritourism has emerged as a valuable alternative tourism route. It has also been presented as a viable strategy for promoting rural development, enhancing agricultural productivity, and diversifying the tourism product. However, despite agritourism being heralded as a panacea to tourism product diversification and rural development challenges in southern African countries, very little has been done in terms of policy development and adoption. This paper therefore sought to provide a policy analysis of agritourism among Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) member countries. These southern African countries have unique tourism profiles, thus a sample of six countries were used, namely, Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. A systematic review of policy documents, government reports, government websites, journal articles and other published material on agritourism related to the different countries was done. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the gathered data. Five major themes emerged from the study which are; national level policy recognition, institutional framework for agritourism, infrastructure, key stakeholders in agritourism and monitoring and support mechanisms for agritourism. The study findings highlight the important role played by national level policies, public-private partnerships and capacity building efforts in driving the growth of agritourism. Insights from this review paper will inform policy makers and other stakeholders on how to be more effective and coordinated in designing agritourism strategies across the Southern African Region and beyond.

## KEYWORDS

agritourism, SADC, tourism development, tourism policy, rural development

## Introduction

Agritourism, an alternative form of tourism that involves visiting a working farm for recreation and/or education has grown tremendously over the past few decades (Chase et al., 2018; Gil et al., 2013; Van Zyl and Van der Merwe, 2021). This type of tourism, associated with visitors engaging in farming activities as well as purchasing local farm produce has become a viable diversification option as well as an alternative source of income for farmers globally (Chikuta and Makacha, 2016; Baipai et al., 2023). According to a report by the [The Business Research Company](#) (2024, p. 1), the global agritourism market shows a growth trajectory from about US\$57 billion in 2023 to almost US\$80 billion by 2028 (Figure 1). Europe is expected to continue dominating the global market due to the abundance of agritourism destinations on the continent.

Agritourism can be traced back to the early 1960s when Italian small-scale farmers began to leave the rural areas to look for jobs in large cities and town. This was mainly triggered by the low farming profits and a general withdrawal from the rural past after World War 11 (Santucci, 2013; Everts, 2020). In order to promote rural development



and enhance farmers livelihoods through alternative purses of income, agritourism was introduced. At this point, there was no framework to regulate this new form of enterprise. This lack of regulation in the agritourism sector resulted in teething challenges (Santucci, 2013). One such challenge had to do with jurisdictional ambiguity where the multiple stakeholder institutions were not sure of what to do with newly opened agritourism operations. These institutions included the municipalities and government departments responsible for agriculture, tourism finance and health. As a consequence, pioneering agritourism operators were unnecessarily fined and sometimes shut down (Santucci, 2013). In 1985, the first national law on agritourism (followed by regional laws) was passed in Italy to encourage and promote agritourism, particularly farm stay tourism (Everts, 2020). This law became a benchmark for other European countries that later joined the agritourism bandwagon. By 2022 Italy had over 25000 agritourism operators and generating in excess of 1.5 billion Euros annually. While significant research on agritourism has been conducted in Europe, some regions still lag behind in this respect. Such regions include Africa, particularly southern Africa. The only available report on agritourism statistics for Africa was published by the Horizon's Grand View Research. The report combined Africa and the Middle East whose combined agritourism revenue is expected to reach US\$440 million by 2030. The report further projects a compound annual growth rate of 10.7% from 2024 to 2030 (Horizon, 2024, p. 1).

In southern Africa, agritourism is in its infancy both in concept and practice (Chikuta et al., 2023). Just as it was in the early stages of agritourism development in Europe, particularly Italy, so it is in southern Africa today. Although the region has an agro-based economy, which make it suitable for agritourism development, little progress has been recorded to date. Could this be because the regional block still needs to take a more deliberate approach at policy level to recognize and support this emerging tourism sub-sector? This question remains unanswered.

Research on agritourism policy in the region remains relatively limited, particularly in countries like Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, where agritourism is still emerging (Baipai et al.,

2022; Nyahunda et al., 2022; Nust, 2023; Schultz, 2024). Litheko (2022) believes that agritourism can serve as a strategic tool in the development of rural areas in South Africa. Rogerson and Rogerson (2021) consider agritourism as an opportunity to link rural agricultural activities with the tourism sector, enhancing rural livelihoods and promoting sustainable land-use practices particularly in Southern Africa. Research has also been carried out on the size and scope of agritourism (Van Zyl, 2019), critical success factors for agritourism development (Baipai et al., 2022; Van Zyl and Van der Merwe, 2021), challenges and prospects (Chikuta and Makacha, 2016; Chikuta et al., 2023).

While the above studies have been conducted on agritourism in southern Africa, there is limited research on the policy issues particularly addressing national recognition and support mechanism for agritourism development in Africa. Policy frameworks governing agritourism development in Southern Africa are largely shaped by each country's national tourism and agricultural policies (Baipai et al., 2022; Chirambo, 2020; Mbaiwa, 2022; Rogerson, 2018; Mendelsohn, 2021; Mwaura, 2021; Nust, 2023). In some countries, agritourism is explicitly recognized as a strategic priority, while in others, it remains an emerging concept with limited formal support (Baipai et al., 2022, 2023; Mbaiwa, 2022). However, Baipai et al. (2023) lament the absence of a framework for agritourism development as a contributor to the underutilization of agriculture attractions for tourism purposes.

In some countries, agritourism policies tend to focus more on commercial agricultural operators rather than smallholders who could benefit most from diversification into tourism activities (Chirambo, 2020; Mwaura, 2021). Policy gaps persist in terms of recognizing the unique needs of smallholder farmers and rural communities. This has resulted in haphazard approaches to agritourism in the region (Baipai et al., 2023). If this area is not interrogated and recommendations proffered for a more organized approach, the dream of reaping adequate benefits from agritourism will take long to be realized. Schultz (2024) argues that more needs to be done to transform the industry. Rogerson (2018) emphasizes the need for multi-stakeholder platforms that bring together tourism and agriculture sectors to create cohesive policies that support rural communities. This approach is crucial for ensuring that agritourism contributes to sustainable rural development while addressing the socio-economic needs of the communities involved.

Despite the fragmented information available on agritourism in southern Africa, no study has been undertaken to compare the agritourism policies and/or frameworks in the region. Using a systematic literature/document review approach, this study sought to conduct a comparative analysis of the extent of agritourism policy development and adoption in southern Africa.

## Methods

A qualitative systematic review was adopted in synthesizing the existing literature on the concept of agritourism. Zhang (2022) notes that a qualitative systematic review, also known as a qualitative evidence synthesis, systematically collects and synthesizes findings from qualitative studies. Qualitative systematic review involves a number of steps (Chong and Plonsky, 2021).

Firstly, focus was placed on reviewing academic literature guided by key terms such as agriculture, tourism, agritourism, farm based tourism and alternative tourism. Using databases such as Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar databases the authors identified a number of peer reviewed journal articles, book chapters and conference proceedings that explicitly addressed the concept of agritourism. Sixty two quality articles published between the period 2010 and 2024 were used after a careful systematic review process. The process involved firstly consideration of the types of studies. Case studies that focused on agritourism, agritourism and communities, agritourism and livelihoods were considered. Causal studies that showed relationships between agritourism and societal needs and growth were given due attention. Exploratory studies carried out in the regional block SADC were considered for their pioneering work in this study area of agritourism. In doing so the researchers reviewed both qualitative and quantitative studies. Duplicates and irrelevant sources that do not add value to the SADC study area were removed. The next stage was a focused content search on target nation's policy documents that addressed agritourism directly or indirectly. Information was retrieved from government reports, government websites, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) seeking to alleviate poverty through agritourism. Having gathered all the data considered essential, the authors then conducted a thematic analysis using a combination of deductive and inductive coding approaches. Key themes and patterns were identified through close reading, annotating and categorizing the source materials. The process involved identifying the level at which agritourism is being recognized, the nature of frameworks that agritourism is taking in the SADC Regional block, an assessment of agritourism infrastructure at the disposal of the stakeholders in the region, identification of the key stakeholders and guiding principles designed to grow agritourism. The process allowed the researchers to distill the critical elements, underlying motivations and broader implications of the agritourism concept as applied within the current SADC sample country, which are Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

## Findings and discussion

Findings from this study identify five major themes that are critical to the development and implementation of agritourism initiatives in the southern African region. These themes are: national-level policy recognition, institutional framework for agritourism, infrastructure, key stakeholders in agritourism, and monitoring and support mechanisms for agritourism. [Table 1](#) below provides a summary of existing and emerging themes from the study.

The findings under each theme are presented in the paragraphs below. Summary of findings according to country are captured in [Table 2](#).

### National level policy recognition

Agritourism policy recognition varies significantly across southern African countries. [Rogerson and Rogerson \(2021\)](#) concur that some countries are yet to harness the potential of agritourism

TABLE 1 Summary of existing and emerging themes from the study.

Theme	Existing themes	Emerging themes
National-level policy recognition	Policies recognizing the role of agritourism's in rural development and economic growth.	Emergence of agritourism's role in environmental and cultural preservation. agritourism policy
Institutional framework	Frameworks linking agritourism with agriculture and tourism sectors.	Creation of specialized institutions that promote agritourism as an independent sector.
Infrastructure for agritourism	Availability of infrastructure like roads and utilities to support tourism access.	Investment in digital infrastructure, such as online booking platforms, to enhance agritourism reaches.
Key stakeholders in agritourism	Government, farmers, tourism players and community organizations.	Other stakeholders, and international investors in agritourism initiatives.
Monitoring and support mechanisms	Periodic government reviews and limited local support programs.	Monitoring and support systems and public private partnerships for agritourism

for socio-economic transformation. [Busby and Rendle \(2021\)](#) and [Dias \(2023\)](#) suggest that a strong policy framework is crucial for the growth of agritourism. [Tew and Barbieri \(2022\)](#) highlight the importance of institutional frameworks in coordinating agritourism initiatives and ensuring that they align with broader tourism and agricultural strategies. In some countries, agritourism is integrated in the broader developmental policies of either tourism or agriculture, whilst in others it is missing. The paragraphs below present the level of agritourism policy recognition in Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

### Botswana

The government of Botswana recognizes the existence and significance of agritourism as an alternative tourism product. Botswana's tourism is primarily wildlife-based, therefore an alternative product is good for diversification ([Chikuta et al., 2023](#)). While there is no policy on agritourism as of now, the Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism in Botswana has guidelines for licensing of agro-tourism operations (Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources Conservation and Tourism). These guidelines use the term agro-tourism instead of agri-tourism. Agro-tourism is here defined as "the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agribusiness operation for the purpose of leisure, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation or just staying in rural areas and visiting attractions in those areas". The document provides details on the rationale for agritourism, forms of agritourism that can be pursued in Botswana, land requirements, nature preservation, safety and security, design of accommodation facilities.

According to the guidelines, in areas that are designated as National Agricultural Production Zones (prime land), for an operation to be licensed under agritourism, 80% of the land should be utilized for active agricultural operations while not more than 15% should be dedicated to buildings and structures. If the area is not in the prime land, at least 50% should be dedicated to

TABLE 2 Summary of findings according to country.

Theme	Botswana	Malawi	Namibia	South Africa	Zambia	Zimbabwe
National-level policy recognition	Recognizes the potential of agritourism	Recognizes the potential of agritourism	Recognizes the potential of agritourism	Recognizes the potential of agritourism	Recognizes the potential of agritourism	Recognizes the potential of agritourism
Institutional framework	Agritourism in Botswana falls under the Department of Tourism	There is lack of a dedicated institution on agritourism. There is no formal collaboration among Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Wildlife, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Water Development	There is lack of a dedicated institution on agritourism. Ministry of Environment, Forestry, and Tourism and the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Land reform perform overlapping roles.	There is lack of a dedicated institution on agritourism. Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development and the Department of Tourism perform overlapping roles.	There is lack of a dedicated institution on agritourism. Ministry of Agriculture handles agriculture related policies, whereas, Ministry of Tourism and Arts focus on tourism related policies	There is lack of a dedicated institution on agritourism. There is lack of integration among Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality Industry and the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water, and Rural Development
Infrastructure for agritourism	There is adequate infrastructure for agritourism. However, more is required.	There is inadequate infrastructure to support agritourism development	There is inadequate infrastructure to support agritourism development	There is adequate infrastructure for agritourism. However, more is required.	There is inadequate infrastructure to support agritourism development	There is inadequate infrastructure to support agritourism development
Key stakeholders in agritourism	Government, private sector, non-governmental organizations and development partners, local communities and farmers and research institutions	Government, private sector, non-governmental organizations and development partners, local communities and farmers and research institutions	Government, private sector, non-governmental organizations and development partners, local communities and farmers and research institutions	Government, private sector, non-governmental organizations and development partners, local communities and farmers and research institutions	Government, private sector, non-governmental organizations and development partners, local communities and farmers and research institutions	Government, private sector, non-governmental organizations and development partners, local communities and farmers and research institutions
Monitoring and support mechanisms	Botswana Tourism Organization (BTO) is mandated to provide support and monitor agritourism development.	There is lack of adequate monitoring mechanisms and support structures required for agritourism	There is lack of a formal monitoring mechanisms for agritourism.	Agritourism is mainly private sector driven. There is lack of a national framework for licensing and regulating agritourism.	There is limited support mechanisms for agritourism	There is lack of a formalized monitoring and support mechanisms for agritourism

agricultural activities. According to the guidelines, agri-tourists may participate in growing, harvesting and processing locally grown food crops on farms. Agritourism activity may also include, farm tours, farm stay with bed and breakfast, tractor or bullock cart rides, donkey riding, horse riding, fishing, milking, Ostrich riding, Peacock viewing and other farming activities in the area. Besides these guidelines, no other official document provides information about agritourism in Botswana. A word search shows that even the Botswana Tourism Policy of 2021 only mentions the term agro-tourism under key objective 5 which is to;

*“promote other forms of tourism such as, Culture, Heritage, Sports, Religion Tourism, Meetings Incentives Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE), Game Farming, Research, Astro-tourism, Agro-tourism etc. to diversify the tourism product.”*

Apart from this statement, nowhere else is agritourism mentioned in the whole policy document. One may argue that the mere mention of agro-tourism shows that the country recognizes it as a worthwhile tourism subsector.

In Botswana's National Tourism Master Plan of 2000, no mention is made of either agri-tourism or agri-tourism. This could be attributed to the fact that by the time the master plan was coined, agritourism was not yet recognized in Botswana. There is hope that future master plans will include agritourism as much as other tourism sub-sectors. A look at other documents, including the Tourism Act of 2009 and the Guidelines for Eco-tourism certification shows that agri/agro-tourism is not mentioned. Again since agritourism is a relatively new concept in Botswana, these documents could have been written before agritourism became prominent.

An article in the Business Weekly and Review dated May 24, 2022 highlighted that the government of Botswana has added agro-tourism to its diversification target list ([The Business Weekly Review, 2022](#)). This was said at the HATAB Annual Congress held in Kasane. According to the article, the Minister responsible for tourism highlighted that agritourism will help reduce over-dependence on wildlife-based tourism products and at the same time spread tourism across the country. At the same meeting, the minister responsible for agriculture stressed the need for farmers to not only concentrate on plowing the fields but also finding creative ways of attracting visitors to their farms. This shows that there is some inter-ministerial dialogue on agritourism and the government of Botswana is committed to see it grow.

## Malawi

[Malawi \(2022, p.12\)](#) state that the government aims to “develop new tourism products such as community-based tourism, agri-tourism, eco-tourism, conference tourism and cultural tourism.” The policy specifically mentions farm based tourism as a potential area for development. However, it is presented just as such a potential area without further clarity on how it will be exploited. This hinders its adoption as stakeholders are left without a clear policy guideline on how to exploit this avenue and benefit from tourism. Other policy documents include national agriculture policy of 2016–2020 which emphasized the need for value addition and income diversification for farmers. Though it did not mention

agritourism, it can be argued that agritourism concept fits well into this development plan. Furthermore, the findings show that the country has several policies that support agriculture and tourism, such as National Agriculture Policy and Tourism Strategic Plan. The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy 111 (2017–2022) highlight agriculture and tourism as key economic growth priority areas. Without being explicit on agritourism, the strategy provided a supportive framework for initiatives that combine these two sectors implying the value of agritourism tourism in the Malawian economy.

In its National Export Strategy of 2013 to 2018 Malawi identified tourism as one of the priority sectors for export diversification. With the need to expand tourism export opportunities agritourism can be viewed as one innovative tourism product worth exploring. This left the options open to investors to explore what they view as ideal and best for themselves rather than what the government would want to be pursued for the greater good of the nation.

It is quite evident that Malawi like many other developing countries would want to leverage on agriculture and tourism for development. It becomes inevitable that agritourism which combines agriculture and tourism takes center stage. However, [Kafle et al. \(2021\)](#) observed that there is no explicit policy on agritourism for effective implementation and development of this tourism niche. Malawi is borrowing from SADC Tourism Program (2020–2030) in trying to bank on agritourism to achieve sustainable tourism development.

Policy without action is not enough, to show value and commitment to leveraging on agritourism as a tool for rural community development, some local authorities in Malawi have invested in agritourism as part of their district development plan. At national level the Government has partnered with international partners in conducting capacity building programs for farmers interested in diversifying into agritourism. The only setback was that the efforts were limited and not part of a comprehensive national strategy designed to promote agritourism with clear goals and objectives.

## Namibia

In Namibia, tourism and agriculture are both recognized as critical sectors for the country's development. However, agritourism does not feature as a distinct area of focus among other sectors. [Sifolo et al. \(2023\)](#) note that the Namibia Tourism Board Strategic Plan mentions rural and community-based tourism, but does not clearly mention agritourism. However, Namibia community-based tourism also incorporates some elements of agritourism.

The country's National Policy on Tourism emphasizes sustainable and inclusive tourism development, thereby recognizing agritourism as a key area. [Sifolo et al. \(2023\)](#) alludes that the Ministries of Agriculture, Water, and Land Reform and the Environment, Forestry, and Tourism, although having overlapping mandates, they are detached, making agritourism development difficult. For instance, whilst the Ministry of Agriculture, Water, and Land Reform is mandated to promote sustainable agricultural practices, there is minimal integration of



tourism within agricultural policies, reflecting a broader oversight in national strategies. Namibia's Fifth National Development Plan (NDP5) and the Harambee Prosperity Plan II (2021–2025) focus on mainstreaming rural economic development and diversification through innovative tourism products, which could include agritourism.

Namibia's strong emphasis on community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) and community-based tourism (CBT) provides an indirect pathway for agritourism development. The National Rural Development Policy and the Tourism White Paper encourage rural communities to engage in tourism-related activities, including farming ventures that combine tourism and agriculture (Jones et al., 2021). The Conservancy Program, which gives local communities control over natural resources and tourism ventures, has indirectly supported agritourism ventures by encouraging community-based tourism models (Jones et al., 2021). Although the government of Namibia provides indirect support, it is not enough to establish agritourism as a formidable sub sector as there are no deliberate policies or institutional frameworks that address the specific needs of agritourism operators.

## South Africa

While agritourism in South Africa can be traced back to as early as the 1860s (Van Zyl and Van der Merwe, 2021), no official agritourism policy or guidelines have been developed to date. In 2005, an Agritourism Program (ATP) was launched as a response to the opportunities offered by the growing tourism industry, however very little information exists about the program. According to Van Niekerk et al. (2013), the ATP aimed at capacitating farmers to participate in agritourism. The program, however seemed to have died a natural death when there was change in the cabinet.

The closest official documents available, relating to agritourism, are the Rural Tourism Strategy and the Comprehensive Rural Development Framework for South Africa. The Comprehensive Rural Tourism Development Framework is a general guideline for developing rural areas in the country. The rural tourism strategy aims at (i) creating descent employment for rural people through inclusive economic growth (ii) vibrant, equitable and sustainable rural communities contributing to food security for all, and (iii) creating a better South Africa and contributing to a better and safer Africa (Department of Tourism, 2012, p. 18). While these objectives do not mention anything about agritourism, it is important to remember that agritourism is usually classified under rural tourism (Chikuta and Makacha, 2016; Chase et al., 2018) therefore any policy that positively impacts rural tourism is likely to benefit agritourism.

A word search in other official government documents (including the National Tourism Sector Strategy, Tourism White Paper, and Tourism Master Plan) revealed that no mention is made of the term agritourism or related concepts. Despite the absence of a nationwide policy on agritourism, there are specific policies or guidelines for the different components that make up agri-tourism. These may differ from region to region. For instance, in Western Cape, Cape Nature provides guidelines regarding how to keep wildlife for tourism. There are also guidelines for Bird watching under Birdlife SA, accommodation by the Tourism Grading

Council while the Restaurants Association provides guidelines for restaurants.

Despite the absence of national policy or guidelines, South Africa remains the most active agritourism destination in southern Africa (Grillini et al., 2022). Agritourism in South Africa comes in different forms including agricultural shows/exhibitions/expos, U-pick, ostrich rides and races, farm game viewing, wine tasting (wine routes), and farm stays, among others. For instance, the NAMPO Harvest Day is the largest agricultural show and in 2016 it attracted more than 650 exhibitors and over 75,000 attendees (Theron and Muller, 2016 cited in Van Zyl, 2019).

## Zambia

With evolving developments in and around tourism in Zambia, it was noted that as of 2024 it did not have a specific standalone policy exclusively dedicated to agritourism. However, elements of agritourism support are found in other documents related to tourism and agriculture. The National Tourism Policy of 2015 identifies agritourism as a key subsector within the broader tourism industry context that needs targeted support and development. The policy explicitly states that: "Promote agri-tourism opportunities such as farm and ranch visits." The policy also outlines specific strategies to promote agritourism. These include encouraging public-private partnerships in the development of agritourism enterprises, improving infrastructure such as road access and tourism facilities to support agritourism activities. There is need to provide training and capacity building programs for agritourism operators and farmers so as to prepare them for the tourism to take place around their everyday life of agriculture. It also aimed to establish a dedicated agritourism investment fund to mobilize financial resources that would work as a revolving fund to support agritourism investors from time to time.

In Zambia's Tourism Master Plan (2018–2022), agritourism is emphasized as an area that requires prioritization for tourism development. Specific interventions are directed toward creation of agriculture based tourism clusters and the development of agritourism circuits that connects various agricultural and cultural attractions in Zambia. Zambia's agricultural policy of 2016–2020 acknowledged the importance of diversifying agricultural activities with emphasis on value addition and income diversification for farmers. Without being explicit, agritourism is here perceived as one of the possible avenues to follow in order to satisfy this aspect of farmer development.

The Zambian rural development strategy of 2017–2021 highlighted the importance of rural development and diversification of the rural economy. It does not specify agritourism as one such route to achieve the desired goals. However, with agritourism having been used to achieve the same goals elsewhere it can be argued that this rural development strategy provides a supportive framework for such initiatives (Dionysopoulou, 2020). Other avenues include the Zambia development agency which has shown great interest in the promotion of agritourism. Occasionally they have included agritourism projects in their investment promotion activities despite that not being their primary focus. This entails having a support system that is lukewarm rather than robust to get agritourism into the tourism mainstream.

Despite the existence of these various documents that highlight the value of agritourism and possibly how it can be exploited for community development, little is being done on the ground to get the desired results. According to Nyagadza et al. (2024) there is no explicit policy support for agritourism. As a result the development of agritourism is optional left at the discretion of those who wish and want to pursue such route to gain personal advantages rather than general community advantages. Looking into the future, Zambia still has potential to gain more from agritourism as it continues to learn from the regional body (SADC) through the SADC Tourism Programme (2020–2030) that emphasizes agritourism as a potential area for sustainable tourism development in the region.

## Zimbabwe

Although a number of efforts have been made to bring forth the agenda of agritourism, Zimbabwe still does not have an agritourism policy. For instance, the study found that a number of scholarly articles have been published on the prospects and potential of agritourism in Zimbabwe, but the country still lags behind in terms of developing deliberate policies on agritourism (Chikuta and Makacha, 2016; Baipai et al., 2022, 2023; Zvavahera and Chigora, 2023; Zhou, 2024). Despite the country being an agro-based economy, agritourism still remains underdeveloped (Baipai et al., 2023). Zhou (2024) bemoans the inadequacies of the current Zimbabwean tourism development policies, which do not recognize other forms of tourism, such as agritourism.

Zimbabwe hosts a number of activities that supports the growth of agritourism, which include, agriculture shows, field days, and farm visits, among others. These activities, although drawing a large number of visitors and attendees, they have not been packaged for agritourism. Events such as agriculture shows, field days and farm visits provide a perfect leverage for establishing agritourism policies.

All the policy documents in the country are silent about agritourism. A look at the Zimbabwe (2020) only provides a definition for agro-tourism. Matsa and Muringaniza (2022) notes that The National Tourism Recovery and Growth Strategy indicate the potential for rural tourism, but does not address agritourism. The strategy also speaks into the need to work with other sectors such as agriculture, but does not articulate how the tourism sector can work with agriculture. The National Development Strategy 1 (2021–2025) only mentions sustainable tourism development but does not proceed to dissect how sustainability would be achieved. The Zimbabwe Agriculture Policy Framework (ZAPF) also mention tourism in the sector's growth efforts, but does not explicitly state how the sectors would work together. Dube and Chirisa (2021) note that lack of synergy in policy development undermines the potential to promote cross sectoral linkages between the agriculture and tourism sectors. However, the government's recent focus on promoting rural development through initiatives such as Devolution can be used as an avenue for promoting policy integration among various sectors (Madzivanzira and Mandizadza, 2022).

## Institutional framework for agritourism

The institutional frameworks for agritourism in southern Africa also differ from country to country. Baipai et al. (2023) proposed a framework that illuminates three critical stages for sustainable agritourism development, which are planning, development and implementation. Some countries have established dedicated government agencies or departments responsible for agritourism development, while others lack formalized structures. The paragraphs below present the findings on the institutional framework for agritourism in the selected southern African countries.

### Botswana

Agritourism in Botswana falls under the Department of Tourism in the Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism. While other stakeholders may have been consulted in developing the guidelines for licensing agritourism operations, the primary responsibility for implementing these guidelines lies in the Department of Tourism. The department however works closely with the Botswana Tourism Organization (BTO), the national tourism body responsible for planning, developing and implementing tourism marketing and promotional strategies in Botswana (among other responsibilities) (Government of Botswana, 2010). The Botswana Tourism Organization is responsible for implementing the guidelines on behalf of the Department of Tourism. It can be concluded that agritourism is officially institutionalized in Botswana.

### Malawi

Malawi does not have a dedicated institution focusing on agritourism. Instead, the country has two main governmental bodies that are relevant to agritourism, which are the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Wildlife, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Water Development. Chifundo and Kalua (2023) note that there are ministries that oversee tourism and agriculture, however, there is lack of institutional frameworks for formal collaboration toward agritourism development. Thus, despite agritourism being viewed as a potential driver of rural development, the absence of a policy or institutional framework makes it difficult for stakeholder to invest and develop the sector.

### Namibia

In Namibia, agritourism is not yet fully recognized as a sub-sector. Two government Ministries perform overlapping functions, Ministry of Environment, Forestry, and Tourism and the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Land reform are responsible for developing institutional frameworks that support the development of agritourism. However, Nangula and Muteka (2023) note that efforts to integrate the agriculture and tourism sectors for agritourism have been limited. Whilst the Namibia Tourism Board is charged with promoting the country's tourism, there is currently no institutional framework for agritourism, which limits the board from promoting agritourism as a distinct sub-sector. Sifolo et al.

(2023) notes that support programs for community-based tourism are available, however, the same cannot be said for agritourism.

### South Africa

In South Africa, agriculture falls under the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development while tourism is regulated by the Department of Tourism. There is no specific institution for agritourism at national level. However, farm-based hunting tourism activities fall under the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment. In the Western Cape, where agritourism activities are more pronounced, the departments of Agriculture, Economic Development, and Tourism have been combined into one and this move is likely going to boost agritourism (Tembo, 2024). The main challenge at national government level is the lack of coordination among the key ministries that directly impact agritourism.

### Zambia

Zambia does not have a dedicated institution that focuses on agritourism, instead, the country has ministries and parastatals that either look at tourism or agriculture. Furthermore, findings from this study show that there are no institutional frameworks for agritourism in Zambia. The Ministry of Agriculture handles agriculture related policies, whereas, Ministry of Tourism and Arts focus on tourism related policies. Findings from this study indicate that agritourism in Zambia is multi-sectoral bringing together agriculture and tourism. Furthermore, Zambia Tourism Agency (ZTA) and Zambia Development Agency (ZDA) also play a role in tourism and investment promotion. Looking at both the National Agriculture Policy and the Tourism Policy of Zambia, there is no evidence on how each sector relates with agritourism at it is not yet a formal sub-sector. The country's The Seventh National Development Plan (7NDP) recognizes both agriculture and tourism as key drivers of economic development but does not specifically promote their integration. Ngoma and Zulu (2023) found that the absence of a formal policy framework hinders the development of agritourism and leaves stakeholders without clear guidelines or incentives for developing the sector.

### Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, two government ministries are involved in agritourism development, these are, Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality Industry and the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water, and Rural Development. Although both ministries recognize the importance of agritourism to their respective sectors, the study finds that there is lack of integration among the ministries for agritourism development. Mugambiwa et al. (2022) also found insufficient collaboration between the two ministries thereby negatively affecting agritourism development. Currently, there is no institutional framework for agritourism which has resulted in fragmented efforts in policy development and adoption. The main challenge with lack of institutional frameworks for agritourism is that no deliberate strategies for the sector's development can be implemented.

## Infrastructure

The study found that infrastructure is a critical factor for the success of agritourism. This infrastructure include, access to reliable transportation networks, energy, communication technology, and basic amenities such as accommodation and sanitation facilities are essential for attracting tourists to rural areas. The availability and quality of roads, accommodation, and other tourism-related services vary significantly from country to country. According to Rogerson (2018), the availability of infrastructure for agritourism is crucial to expanding tourism to rural areas. Rogerson and Baum (2023) found that poor infrastructure is a major obstacle to rural tourism in many parts of Africa. Investing in infrastructure is critical for improving access to rural areas and enabling the growth of agritourism. Hall (2021) also found that ensuring rural communities have access to basic amenities such as roads, sanitation, and digital connectivity is essential for creating a sustainable agritourism ecosystem. Countries that have invested in infrastructure development are better positioned to leverage agritourism as a tool for rural development. The findings further show that inadequate infrastructure negatively affect the growth of agritourism. The paragraphs below show findings on the state of infrastructure for agritourism among the selected southern Africa countries.

### Botswana

In Botswana, there are no specific infrastructure requirements for agritourism. Since agritourism is primarily rural-based, any infrastructure that supports rural development is good for agritourism development (Nguyen, 2022). These infrastructures include reliable and safe roads, electricity, portable water and internet connectivity. This was attributed to the establishment of a Rural Development Council in the 1970s which is chaired by the Vice President of the country and constituted by all permanent secretaries. To date, most rural areas in Botswana boast of good roads, reliable electricity and tapped water. This kind of infrastructure is critical for agritourism, therefore one may say the government of Botswana has provided the basic infrastructure required for agritourism development.

### Malawi

Findings from the study show that Malawi is affected by physical and soft infrastructure challenges which affect the growth and development of agritourism. Inadequate transport infrastructure presents a significant challenge as most rural areas in Malawi have poor road networks. Chilombo and Kanyerere (2022) note that poor road conditions in rural regions make it difficult for tourists to access agritourism sites, particularly during the rainy season when roads become impassable. The absence of reliable transport options limits the movement of tourists to these areas thereby reducing the potential for agritourism to generate income for rural communities. Furthermore, many rural areas do not have sufficient lodging and accommodation options for tourists, and existing ones often lack the basic amenities that international and domestic tourists expect (Phiri and Banda, 2023). The study further found that lack of reliable utilities such as



electricity, water supply and sanitation facilities present significant impediments to agritourism development in the country. [Manda and Chimalilo \(2022\)](#) found that limited internet connectivity and poor mobile network coverage in rural areas restrict the ability of agritourism operators to market their services and engage with potential customers. The country therefore needs urgent attention to address the infrastructure challenges in order to realize the benefits associated with agritourism development.

## Namibia

Findings from this study show that despite Namibia's good transport networks, its rural transportation infrastructure, particularly roads, are underdeveloped, limiting access to potential agritourism sites. [Sifolo et al. \(2023\)](#) also found that Namibia has a relatively well-maintained highway system which connects major cities and towns, however, the country's rural roads, which connect to farms and remote agritourism destinations poorly maintained. Apart from roads, rural areas also lack digital connectivity and accommodation facilities. [Jones et al. \(2021\)](#) found that rural areas in Namibia lack essential services such as roads, accommodation and digital connectivity which are crucial for attracting agritourism. Although the country's digital connectivity has improved in urban centers, rural areas, where most agritourism activities take place, still experience limited internet coverage ([Nangula and Muteka, 2023](#)). However, there is hope for improved internet connectivity as the country adopted the Namibia Broadband Policy (2022–2027) which seeks to bridge the digital divide.

## South Africa

While South Africa is generally regarded as a relatively more advanced economy in Africa, with better infrastructure, that may not be the case for rural areas. Agritourism takes place in rural farming communities and according to [Botha \(2021\)](#), the state of the road infrastructure in rural areas of South Africa has negatively affect farmers, who transport both inputs and their harvest via road. According to Business Leadership South Africa, most infrastructure in the country suffers from maintenance backlogs, causing frequent breakdowns and disruptions ([Botha, 2021](#); [Kepe et al., 2001](#)). The study revealed that, while electricity powerlines are in most rural districts in South Africa, the country has in recent years struggled to meet the electricity requirements of its citizenry. Lack of electricity is a hinderance to agritourism development especially considering that some agritourism operators are small scale farmers who may find it difficult to secure back-up energy for both their farming and accommodation operations. The absence of reliable electricity negatively affects internet connectivity and mobile network in South Africa. Although government initiatives have aimed to improve infrastructure, there is a need for more focused investment in agritourism-related facilities and services.

## Zambia

Poor transport infrastructure also present a major challenge to the development of agritourism in Zambia. The study found although the country has made meaningful in major roads linking cities and established tourist destinations, many rural roads,

especially linking to agritourism sites are in poor conditions. Accommodation and lodging infrastructure were also found to be underdeveloped and in some instances, lacking basic amenities such as electricity, water and sanitation facilities. Many rural areas experience frequent power outages or lack access to electricity altogether, which significantly hampers the ability of agritourism businesses to provide modern amenities for tourists ([Mwila and Banda, 2023](#)). Poor mobile network and limited internet connectivity also adds to the infrastructure challenges facing agritourism enterprises. Furthermore, unavailability of tourism support infrastructure such as tourist information centers and signage limits the attractiveness of agritourism destinations. The study found that targeted investment infrastructure can help improve visitor experiences and also create new opportunities for rural communities.

## Zimbabwe

The study found that the state of infrastructure for agritourism in Zimbabwe is deplorable. Infrastructure such as roads, water supply, electricity and telecommunication were found to be either lacking or poorly maintained. [Matsa and Muringaniza \(2022\)](#) also found that poorly maintained infrastructure in many rural areas where hindering agritourism activities. Key infrastructure components such as visitor accommodation, signage, agritourism facilities, and recreational spaces that cater to tourists are underdeveloped. [Moyo et al. \(2024\)](#) found that agricultural attractions in Zimbabwe have not been fully utilized as tourist attractions mainly due to the issue of accessibility despite the sector being ripe for agritourism. Zimbabwe faces significant infrastructure challenges, including poor road conditions and limited rural accommodation, which impact agritourism potential. [Dube and Chirisa \(2021\)](#) also found that digital connectivity in rural areas remains limited, with many regions experiencing poor internet access or no coverage at all. The absence of these key infrastructures limit the sector's potential to compete with other established forms of tourism.

## Key stakeholders in agritourism

Collaboration among stakeholders also emerged as a critical component for agritourism development. The study found that stakeholders in agritourism include government, private sector players, local communities, non-governmental organizations and the tourists. [Barbieri et al. \(2023\)](#) argue that agritourism thrives when partnerships between local communities, the private sector, and government agencies are well-coordinated. The level of stakeholder engagement also varies from one country to another. The paragraphs below present findings on the key stakeholders in agritourism among different countries in southern Africa.

## Botswana

Findings revealed that the key stakeholders in agritourism development in Botswana include farmers, the Department of Tourism, Botswana Tourism Organization, the Land Board and the Ministry of Agriculture. While the Department of Tourism is

responsible for licensing the agritourism operators, the Land Board controls the allocation of plots on tribal land and the development of state land. Therefore, if anyone wants to change the use of their land from agriculture to business, they have to apply to the physical planning committee which is responsible for change of land use. The Ministry of Agriculture through its extension services, provides farming knowledge and expertise which is useful for agritourism development. Another key stakeholder is the Department of Wildlife and National Parks which has been instrumental to the introduction of wildlife in farms under the Thuo Letlotlo program (Ministry of Agriculture, 2024).

## Malawi

Findings from the study show that stakeholders in agritourism development in Malawi include the government, private sector, local communities, farmers and non-governmental organizations. The government through the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Wildlife, is the biggest stakeholder as it is responsible for setting policies and strategies to promote agricultural productivity and sustainable tourism development. The private sector especially tourism operators, hospitality entrepreneurs and agribusinesses also play an important role in agritourism development. However, Chimuka and Kalua (2023) found that private sector participation is still relatively low due to lack of financial incentives and lack of recognition of agritourism as a viable business venture. There is need for a coordinated approach among stakeholders to ensure agritourism is considered a viable sector with potential for growth.

## Namibia

The study found that in Namibia, government through the Ministries of Agriculture, Water and Land reform, as well as Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, plays a central role regulation, development and promotion of agritourism. The Namibian government plays a central role in the regulation, development, and promotion of agritourism. Furthermore, the Namibia Tourism Board (NTB), responsible for tourism development, promotes rural and community-based tourism initiatives. Private sector players, especially farmers, local communities and tourism entrepreneurs, were also found to be key stakeholders to the success of agritourism in Namibia. Jones et al. (2021) found that small-scale farmers were looking to diversify their income by offering tourism-related activities such as farm tours, local food tastings, and wildlife experiences. Private tourism operators were found to also seeking to opportunities to include farm tours in their packages. Local communities also sought to augment their incomes by combining farming and tourism, offering visitors a chance to experience traditional farming practices and a taste of local food.

## South Africa

For most southern African countries in this study, the responsibility for agritourism mainly lies in the hands of the tourism ministry in collaboration with the ministry of agriculture. However, when the Agritourism Program (ATP) was first muted in South Africa, it appears that the Minister of Agriculture and

Land Affairs was most instrumental. Had the program not died, it is most likely that agritourism would still be in the hands of the agriculture ministry. Today every provincial government decides on which department to house agritourism (if any). As discussed earlier, the Western Cape has the highest density of agritourism operations and the provincial government decided to combine the ministries responsible for tourism, agriculture and economic development, a move that is likely to promote agritourism. Other important stakeholders include the department responsible for wildlife management, tour operators and the farmers themselves.

## Zambia

The study found that stakeholders in agritourism development in Zambia include the government, private sector organizations, non-governmental organizations and development partners, local communities and farmers and research institutions. However, the participation of these stakeholders in agritourism development remains relatively curtailed owing to the absence of a policy and institutional framework supporting the sector. Mulenga and Tembo (2022) found that private sector participation in agritourism is low as the sector is still in its early stages and remains underdeveloped due to the lack of clear incentives and support structures. Whilst local communities and farmers are increasingly aware of the potential of agritourism, they lack resources, skills and knowledge to actively participate. There is need for collaboration between government institutions, the private sector, NGOs, local communities, and research organizations so as to foster a more integrated and supportive environment for agritourism development.

## Zimbabwe

Although agritourism in Zimbabwe is still in its infancy, there are a number of stakeholders in the sector. The study found a diversity of stakeholders including government institutions, private sector players, local communities, farmers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international development partners. Government through the Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality Industry and Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural resettlement were found to be the biggest stakeholder. Furthermore, Zimbabwe Tourism Authority as a regulator of tourism activities in the country was also found as another stakeholder. The government's regulatory role in agritourism is also evident in the provision of land tenure security for farmers, which an essential factor for those intending to diversify into agritourism. Private sector players, farmers and local communities were found to be important stakeholders for agritourism as they seek to either increase their incomes through tourism related activities, such as, farm tours, farm stays, farm to table experiences, organics farming and local food experiences. Matsa and Muringaniza (2022) found that community-based agritourism initiatives are emerging in regions such as Mashonaland and Manicaland, where traditional farming practices, handicrafts, and heritage sites are integrated into tourism packages. However, the success of these agritourism business ventures depends on capacity building, access to infrastructure and marketing support for operators and other stakeholders in the sector.

## Monitoring and support mechanisms for agritourism

The final theme identified in the study is monitoring and support mechanisms for agritourism. The study found that to ensure long term sustainability of agritourism, there must be monitoring and support mechanisms in place. The study found that many countries in southern Africa do not have formalized structures to evaluate agritourism projects. [Dias et al. \(2022\)](#) highlight the importance of robust monitoring systems for assessing the economic, environmental, and social impacts of agritourism. The unavailability of these monitoring and support mechanisms limit the sector's ability to get the attention that it deserves. The paragraphs below present the findings on the monitoring and support mechanisms that are available in the selected countries.

### Botswana

Agritourism in Botswana is monitored by the Department of Tourism through the guidelines mentioned before. Furthermore, the Botswana Tourism Organization (BTO) is also involved in ensuring that the operations are well-registered and operating in a sustainable manner. The government of Botswana introduced support schemes to develop the agriculture sector and enhance agro-tourism ([Dube, 2022](#); [Ministry of Agriculture, 2024](#)). One such scheme is the Thuo Letlotlo program, an inclusive livestock support program that covers all livestock and wildlife subsectors including beef cattle and stud breeding; dairy (cattle and goats), small stock and stud breeding, poultry, piggery, ostrich, rabbits, apiculture, aquaculture, equine, hides and skins (leather collection and tanning), game farming, irrigated fodder and livestock feed processing, Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ARTs), rangeland management, livestock digitization, agribusiness planning and training, and farm waste management (collection and disposal) ([Ministry of Agriculture, 2024](#), p. 1). The program also involves the provision of grants and loans to farmers depending on their scale of operation, where small-scale farmers get grants while large-scale ones get loans. While this program's primary objective is to ensure food security, it is an effective enabler of the agritourism business if properly embraced.

Another form of support given to farmers in Botswana is training and extension services ([Ministry of Agriculture, 2024](#)). While this kind of support is not primarily aimed at promoting agritourism, it is a known fact that agritourism thrives on best farming practices ([Chase et al., 2018](#); [Baipai et al., 2022](#)). The capacity building through training will help farmers with best farming practices which are an attraction to visitors.

Despite the detailed guidelines of the support schemes, studies revealed that most agritourism operators had not yet received any support from the government. A study by [Chikuta et al. \(2023\)](#) revealed that farmers are struggling to raise funds to put up farm stay facilities and setting up irrigation facilities to boost their agricultural operations. In a study by [Kolawole et al. \(2023\)](#), farmers bemoan the bureaucratic red tape associated with registration of agritourism operations let alone accessing any financial assistance. It may however be argued that the Thuo Letlotlo program is

still in its inception stage and farmers will likely benefit as the program unfolds.

### Malawi

The findings show that while agritourism in Malawi presents significant opportunities for rural economic development, the monitoring mechanisms and support structures required for its sustainable growth remain relatively underdeveloped. Agritourism, like any other form of tourism demands meaningful investment to develop and be recognizable in the broader tourism basket, Malawi government has supportive policy for that. Through Malawi Investment and Trade Center (MITC) there is direct interest in promoting diverse investment opportunities in agriculture, tourism and other sectors of the economy. Though, without being specific it can be implied that through promoting agriculture and tourism, agritourism is also being promoted. [Mkandawire and Banda \(2022\)](#) note that due to unavailability of a specific national policy framework governing agritourism, monitoring structures are often subsumed under broader agricultural or tourism initiatives, leaving the sector's oversight fragmented and uncoordinated. The study found that establishment of a dedicated agritourism task force or unit within the Ministry of Tourism to improve oversight and streamline monitoring efforts can be the starting point to tracking agritourism development. [Phiri and Chikoti \(2023\)](#) note that although Malawi Investment and Trade Center (MITC) and the Malawi Tourism Council (MTC) provide general support for tourism and agricultural investments, there is no focused institutional framework for agritourism. The private sector, NGOs and international development such as UNDP and USAID have provided support mechanisms in the form of capacity building and agriculture diversification programs. However, the impact of these support initiatives remain relatively low as agritourism is yet to be recognized as a viable option for tourism product diversification.

### Namibia

The findings show that in Namibia there are no formal monitoring mechanisms for agritourism. Both agricultural and tourism sectors are overseen by different regulatory bodies, agritourism, which spans both sectors, has been found to suffer from a lack of dedicated mechanisms for tracking its performance and impact ([Nangula and Muteka, 2023](#)). Whilst other sectors fall under a specific regulatory authority, agritourism suffers from the problem of sector identity, making it difficult to account for its performance. [Sifolo et al. \(2023\)](#) found that developing specific agritourism performance indicators, such as, visitor numbers, revenue generation, and socio-economic benefits for local communities, helps to assess its impact and guide future policy decisions. Although not directly related to agritourism, the study found that the government has a number of programs that support agritourism development. These programs include, Harambee Prosperity Plan II (2021–2025) and the Fifth National Development Plan (NDP5). However, these programs do not offer technical and financial support to agritourism operators, thereby limiting their participation in the sector. There is limited support mechanisms for small scale farmers and operators in Namibia who are seeking to diversify to agritourism.

## South Africa

There is an absence of a national framework for licensing and regulating agritourism operations, monitoring of the same is not an easy task for South Africa. The various government stakeholders involved ensure that they enforce regulations within their departmental jurisdiction. For instance, the department responsible for parks and wildlife only monitors wildlife related issues while those responsible for accommodation, agriculture and liquor do the same for theirs. According to [Grillini et al. \(2022\)](#), the government of South Africa has limited support schemes for agritourism related operations. The available schemes are focused on specific activities such as hunting. The Western Cape government assists farmers to manage and protect their wildlife even in a tourism setting under its program called Cape Nature.

Apart from the limited government support, the private sector has played a huge role in promoting and supporting agritourism development in South Africa. A private association called Rural Tourism Africa provides a platform where service providers and tourists meet and communicate [Grillini et al. \(2022\)](#). The association aims to (i) provide rural farmers and communities with the tools necessary to develop agritourism, (ii) fostering long term agritourism environment through collaboration and communication with key stakeholders in the corporate world, tourism organizations and government (iii) promote agritourism among domestic and foreign visitors for rural development, (iv) develop relevant and accessible agritourism intelligence to help sustain a viable network of agritourism participants.

## Zambia

The study found that the government of Zambia has very limited support mechanisms for agritourism. [Phiri and Mulenga \(2023\)](#) note that but there is no integrated monitoring system for agritourism, as the sector falls at the intersection of the agriculture and sectors. Zambia's Tourism Master Plan (2018–2038) and the National Agriculture Policy have goals related to tourism and agricultural development, but these policy documents do not provide measurable indicators or specific monitoring tools for agritourism activities ([Mulenga and Banda, 2022](#)). Although not explicitly related to agritourism, NGOs such as SNV Netherlands Development Organization and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) have implemented rural development projects that align with the goals of agritourism by promoting sustainable land use practices, conservation, and community empowerment. NGOs and other development partners have are providing support in the form of capacity building programs to host visitors, managing the tourism experience and marketing the agritourism product. [Mulenga and Tembo \(2022\)](#) found that the private sector's involvement in agritourism is slowly growing, but it remains constrained by the lack of formal government incentives and support structures.

## Zimbabwe

The findings show that Zimbabwe also suffers from a lack of formalized monitoring framework for agritourism. Both agriculture and tourism are independently monitored through their respective ministries. [Mugambiwa et al. \(2022\)](#) found that there is lack of a cohesive system for tracking agritourism

activities, revenue, or socio-economic impact, thereby hindering prospects of appreciating the sector's economic impact. Despite the country having several development programs in place, agritourism is yet to be integrated into these developmental plans. Programs such as Zimbabwe's Agricultural and Rural Development Authority (ARDA) and the National Tourism Recovery and Growth Strategy focus on expanding agriculture and tourism independently, without specifically addressing their intersection through agritourism ([Nyahunzvi and Mukwada, 2021](#)). Agritourism operators face a myriad of challenges which include access to funding, technical support, and marketing platforms. Non-governmental organizations and other international partners have also been assisting players in the agritourism sector. In an effort to promote sustainable agriculture and rural tourism, organizations such as Practical Action and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) have provided technical assistance, capacity-building programs, and financial resources to help rural communities develop agritourism ventures. However, as these activities are not coordinated, they lack long term sustainability. There is need to establish formal structures that help direct, monitor and support agritourism activities for long term sustainability.

## Conclusion and recommendations

The findings from this study on agritourism in southern Africa provide some insights into the region's capacity to leverage agritourism as a sustainable tool for tourism product diversification and rural development. This study therefore concludes that the level of agritourism policy development and adoption vary from country to country among southern African. Whereas, some countries have integrated agritourism into their national development strategies, others are still to formalize its role in tourism and agricultural policies. The success of agritourism hinges on the strength of national policies, institutional frameworks, infrastructure, stakeholder involvement, and effective monitoring and support mechanisms. Policymakers in southern African countries should prioritize integrated approaches to enhance the development of the agritourism sector, leveraging the unique agricultural and cultural assets of each country. There is also need to invest in developing clear policies, build infrastructure, establishing clear institutional and regulatory frameworks, encouraging collaboration among stakeholders, and develop monitoring and support mechanisms that ensure the sustainability of agritourism in the region. Effective monitoring and support mechanisms are necessary for sustaining agritourism businesses and ensuring their long-term viability. The study recommends a multistakeholder approach to formulating and implementing national policies for agritourism development. The respective national governments should come up with inter-ministerial taskforces to drive agritourism development. On the other hand the private sector needs to come up with agritourism societies or associations that will lobby government of key policy and regulatory issues. With the government and private sector players coming together, a national framework for agritourism can result. Further research should assess the economic, environmental



and social impacts of agritourism so as to give evidence based policy decisions.

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## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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