

## **The Perceptions of Smallholder Farmers on the Use of Mobile Technology: A Naturalistic Inquiry in Zimbabwe**

Samuel Musungwini, Izak van Zyl & Jan H Kroeze

### **Abstract**

This research is an inquiry into the (under)utilisation of mobile phones by smallholder farmers in their agricultural activities in Zimbabwe. Through a naturalistic enquiry, the research established that agricultural extension officers are vital in the adoption and use of mobile phones for agricultural purposes. Those extension officers who were not skilled in productively using mobile phone technology had technophobia, which was the primary reason they did not use the technology in their interactions with farmers. Yet, a sizeable number of farmers used their mobile phones to receive information from agricultural extension officers, officials, other farmers, and market vendors. Interviewed farmers perceived the mobile phone as a tool for education in agricultural matters. However, very few used their phones effectively for agricultural purposes. The research identified two main inhibitors to the acceptance and use of mobile phones by farmers: a lack of the necessary digital skills, and lacking information to use mobile phones. Other inhibiting factors included semi-literacy, old age, insufficient infrastructure, socioeconomic status, excessive cost, and lack of support from telecommunications companies and other service providers. This research contributes a novel perspective to the body of knowledge regarding mobile technology adoption for agricultural activity in marginalised communities.