Coping with changing framework conditions
The Krom-Antonies catchment is situated about 160 km north of Cape Town. The rural area is characterised by a lack of basic infrastructure and services, a dominant agricultural sector and a variety of social issues (domestic violence, alcohol abuse). In the past twenty years the growing patterns as well as the patterns of ownership have changed significantly due to changes in the agricultural market. While some of the long established family farms were able to adapt, other farms fight for survival or are actually not in use anymore. These pervasive changes also affect the farm workers who are connected to their farms by a complex, and often paternalistic system of formal and informal services. Poverty seems to be a distinctive feature in many households (HHs) and migration a common strategy.

Aim of the study
- To gain a better understanding of the poverty situation of farm worker HHs
- To learn more about migration and the impact it has on the HHs

Approach
Since the forward looking concept of vulnerability offers crucial advantages towards a contemporary poverty analysis it builds on one scientific basis of the study. For obtaining a detailed insight into the HHs situation, the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) was used as the main tool. Additionally, the analysis of social nets and migrant biographies helped to gain a better understanding of migration in the HHs. Since livelihoods change in a dynamic way, new as well as long-term changes in the political, societal, cultural and environ-mental implications were included in the analysis. For the data collection qualitative and quantitative methods were used. The survey is based on:
- 80 HH interviews on 9 farms
- 16 keyperson interviews (the headmaster of the local elementary school, a representative of the workers union, a local nurse and a labour broker)
- 1 focus group discussion

Based on the life centre of the interviewees and the expected length of stay on the farm, three different groups of HHs were analysed in detail:
- the permanent residents,
- the seasonal residents (in connection to their HHs of origin) and
- the temporary residents (who stay longer on the farm like seasonal HHs but don’t have the same status as permanent residents)

The results
Although there is a tendency towards high or low vulnerability on the different farms, the pure condition of the farm or its formal and informal setup are not sufficient to deduce the vulnerability of the particular HHs from it. On the other hand the condition of the farm, as the main supplier of essential services, and the relationship between farmers and workers, have big impacts on the HHs, particularly those that are not able to substitute lacking services by migrating to other farms.

Vulnerability ranges from medium to very high within the permanent HHs. The lack of chances for diversi-"fying the HH income, a low total income and high indebtedness are common features within many HHs. This often goes along with low education (esp. less job specialisation) and few physical and natural assets. In contrast to that, most of the HHs show a very high social capital and seem to be extensively connected with other HHs within and beyond the valley. This connectedness and the extensive use of social grants help the HHs to overcome the most severe shocks and stresses.

Permanent households
Within the temporary HHs the vulnerability to poverty is mostly medium. The unsecure and unequal status on the farm and the lack of social integration in place might prevent the HHs from building secure livelihoods. HHs from foreign countries are more vulnerable because of the temporary residency status and the lacking access to some state services.

Temporary households
For the non-permanent HHs migration plays an important role for securing the livelihoods especially when other livelihood strategies fail. Beside the financial aspects, the temporary migration secures accommodation and services (like transport). The long-term effect of seasonal migration on the vulnerability of the HHs as a whole, however, seems to be low in most of the cases. Apart from the low remittances which could not be saved, the seasonal employment never led to a long-term employment on the farms. As stated by a local farmer 40-60% of the seasonal workers return in the following season

Why do they leave the farms? Migration in the permanent HHs is mostly a rural-rural one within small geographical areas. The statistics imply that migration may not be a con-stant phenomenon in the permanent HHs but it’s common that individual members migrate if the circumstances make it possible or even necessary. However, the search for new income sources was not the only reason for the HHs to migrate and changing framework conditions for the residents, the withdrawal of individual services (mostly in connection with arguments with the farmer) and personal reasons are also of importance.

The effects of migration
The empirical findings show, that migration might have a positive impact on the permanent HHs. Especially vulnerable HHs often stayed on the farm for many years and were completely rooted in place, while those HHs which were able to find other income sources outside the farm were way better off. However, not only money but also services which played an important role.

However, the effects on vulnerability don’t need to be positive in all cases. So in some cases a deterioration of the living condition was accepted when moving from one farm to another. Beside the voluntary- also some cases of forced migra-tion could be observed.

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Vulnerability to poverty of South African farm worker households and the impact of migration
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