

Title Market dynamics as a key factor influencing banana production: a case study of Lgoji division Meru central district in Kenya

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Abstract

A large proportion of Kenyan population is engaged in agriculture that accounts for 24.5% of the gross domestic product (GDP). With a high population growth rate, the demand for food production has increased. The increasing demand calls for production of a wide range of food crops that will ensure food security and a surplus to earn income for the households. Banana is of major importance for food security and household income. It can be consumed as a fruit, plantain for cooking and animal feeds among other uses. However, despite the crop's potential to satisfy this need in the economy there is a tendency of low production level in high potential areas. Though farmers acknowledge the viability of banana cultivation for commercial purposes as an exit option from the less profitable enterprises, they are reluctant to fully engage in the enterprise. A study was conducted in Igoji division Meru central district to assess the influence of existing market systems on production decisions of the farmers. Eighty farmers were selected randomly and interviewed using structured questionnaires. Data was analyzed using SPSS. Results revealed that the existing marketing system influenced the decisions made by farmers given the farm-gate prices offered and production costs involved. Inadequate technological adaptation and adoption of tissue-cultured banana, pests and diseases, and inadequate information on the economics of production were among the constraints to optimum production. Though markets are liberalized, producer protection from exploitation is necessary for the infant enterprise to reduce the risks involved in trade-off between crops or exit options to enhance food security and income. There is need for farmer training to increase productivity of banana with emphasis on research-extension-farmer linkages.