

Agribusiness in Horticulture: Empowerment & Gender Dynamic

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Abstract— Farming has been the backbone of the Kenyan economy. With the different agricultural revolutionary platforms down the Kenyan history, farming has advanced to accommodate the growth of globalization – a key aspect which is characterized by intensified demand of cash crops for export. Kenyans have hedged themselves against food insecurity and poor livelihoods through the adoption of agribusiness. This study focused on exploring how cash crop farming has empowered women and the youths within Kibugu region in Embu County, Kenya. Through the use of a qualitative research design, the researcher used the semi-structured interviews to collect data from 45 agricultural informants within the region, particularly from the Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operative associations. The exploratory variables for the study included issues of land ownership, land rights and use, agricultural income, cash crops and the position of women and youths in this type of agriculture. The study found that Kibugu farmers have substituted traditional crops with cash crops including coffee and tea which were associated with increased income for the households. Land acquisition is mostly done through inheritance with males having a greater power to own the lands than females. Female gender has been left out in making land decisions, as well as, its control – a key aspect which has left them outside horticultural farming. Consequently, the study found that women have significant control over income realized through horticultural farming, however, agribusiness playing a key role in accommodating women and youths in this sector. The use of chamas (Micro-finance groups) is becoming a popular source of credit to many of the Embu farmers to facilitate their farming and marketing activities. However, the study recommends the use of digital platforms, increasing farming scales and irrigation, and specialization to place agribusiness on a higher level.

Index Terms— Agribusiness, Horticulture, Empowerment, Gender Dynamics.

I. INTRODUCTION

Prior to colonialism African farmers grew crops mainly for food production. Those who came to explore Africa focused on acquiring raw materials and shipping them to the Western parts of the world. Overtime this practice became quite expensive and they sought for other ways to increase their profits. Private companies such as Imperial British East African Company and the British South African Company incurred high costs in trying to set up a new administration that would protect their interests. These new administrations introduced tax systems and laws that forced local farmers to grow crops that they could sell on local market so as to pay

their taxes. This consequently led to the introduction of cash crops in many parts of Africa. Such crops included cocoa, coffee, tea, cotton and pyrethrum.

The Europeans demonized Africa's indigenous crops. The African grain was classified as cattle feed. The focus on cash crops left most Africans vulnerable during periods of drought, falling world prices and economic failure. During the colonial regime, Africans were moved to less fertile lands known as reserves. They became squatters and were forbidden from planting cash crops. The white man took over the fertile lands where they grew their cash crops for export. Africans were made to work on those farms as slaves.

After independence Africans continued with the colonial tradition of cash cropping. They fought for crops which were better money earners. Most of Kenyan communities are patriarchal as men dominate ownership of critical resources such as land, livestock among others. For example, the constitution of Kenya under article 27 gives men and women right to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres (constitution 2010) however, Customary laws are still practiced which is embedded in peoples culture deeply and cannot be enforced effectively due to invisible social cultural dynamics. Customary laws govern at least 65% of land in Kenya thus limiting women land and property rights. Some estimates state that less than 5 percent names of land titles are registered in women names and less than 30 percent are jointly owned by men and women (FIDA Kenya, Women's Land and Property Rights in Kenya 2009).

Because of prevalence of gender inequality in access to critical resources such as land women tend to lack opportunities to work or get contracts from big horticultural firms to produce high value crops or animal production (Dolan, 2001; Maertens and Swinnen, 2010). This direct bias against women by large organizations tend to increase gender gaps by empowering men more than women who make up majority of the poor in rural areas ((Farina and Reardon, 2000; Reardon et al., 2003)

Women on the other hand have had limited access to essential production resources such as land and inputs. Cash crops are frequently regarded as “men's” crops and subsistence crops as “women's” crop. The role of women in agriculture has often been restricted to producing subsistence food with low potential to generate income. Nonetheless, women more than men spend their incomes on food this consequently improves household food security, nutritional security and development in children (World Bank 2008). In most developing countries women lack access to critical information on agricultural production management, this includes climate/weather information and sustainable land management practices thus hindering their contribution to food security at household levels (Temu and Temu, 2005).

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The economic benefits of trade are largely controlled by and benefit men trapping women in a cycle of poverty. Women also lack access to land, credit facilities, technology, training, inputs, markets and information that would permit them to do well in growing cash crops. Women invest as much as 10 times more of their earnings than men do in their family's well-being such as child health, nutrition and education (Duflo, 2012; Maertens and Verhofstadt, 2013; Quisumbing and Maluccio, 2000).

Agricultural sector is a major contributor to Kenya's economy. It directly accounts for 26 percent of GDP and indirectly 27 percent through its linkages with other sectors of the economy. It makes up 65 percent of Kenya's export earnings and is a major source of employment for more than 68 percent of Kenya's rural population (FAO 2016).

Today agribusiness offers an opportunity to many rural farmers especially women and the youth, In Kibugu location, Embu county much of the productive land is under mixed cropping and small holder animal production (Bebe *et al.*, 2003). With the adoption of *chamas* (women groups) in central and Eastern Kenya women moved from being dependent on their male counterparts to becoming central to households poverty reduction initiatives by accessing loans and creating more opportunities for themselves (Wamue-Ngare and Njoroge 2011). The focus of this research was to understand the impact of horticulture crops on gender dynamics in Kibugu location, Embu County.

II. STUDY AREA

Embu County is located in the eastern region of Kenya and it's approximately between latitude 0° 8' and 0° 50' South and longitude 37° 3' and 37° 9' East. It borders several other Counties such as Kirinyaga, Kitui, Machakos, Murang'a and Meru.

Embu County has two different agro-climatic and natural characteristics which include the upper area around Mt. Kenya and the lower area around Mbeere North and South. The county borders are defined by major rivers such as Tana, Ruingazi, Kii, Thuci, Thibaand Ena. There are also major dams that are partly within the county and are located along Tana River that include Masinga, Kiambere, kindaruma and gitaru.

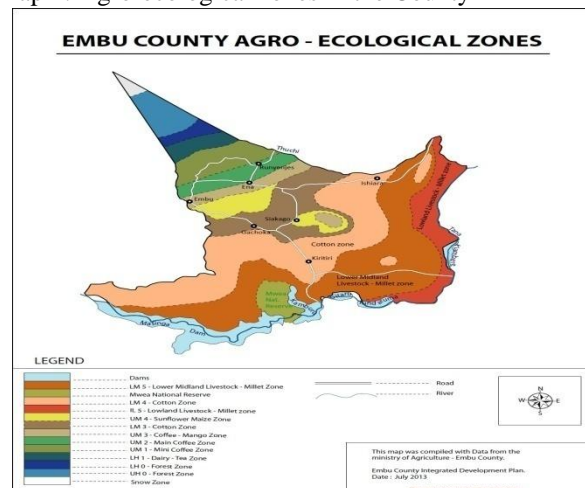
The county depicts agro-ecological features of the windward side of Mt. Kenya from the cold and wet upper zones to the hot and dry lower zone along the Tana River basin. Annual rainfall is more than 2200 mm at 2500 m above the sea level to less than 600mm near Tana River at 700m above the sea level (farm management handbook 2006, p.87). Below is an ecological map of the county.

Map 1: Map from Google earth showing Kibugu Location



(Source: Google earth)

Map 2: Agro-ecological zones in the County



Source: (Embu-CIDP-2013-2017. P.5).

III. DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND TOOLS

Two major sources of data were used, namely primary and secondary data. Primary sources were applied using key informant interviews targeting respondents who had connections to horticulture, tea and coffee production in Kibugu location. The respondents included Embu County government, Ministry of Agriculture, Kibugu cooperative and traders at the local market. Household questionnaires were also administered targeting mainly farmers in the study area.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Interface Between Traditional and Cash Crops in Terms of Land Use

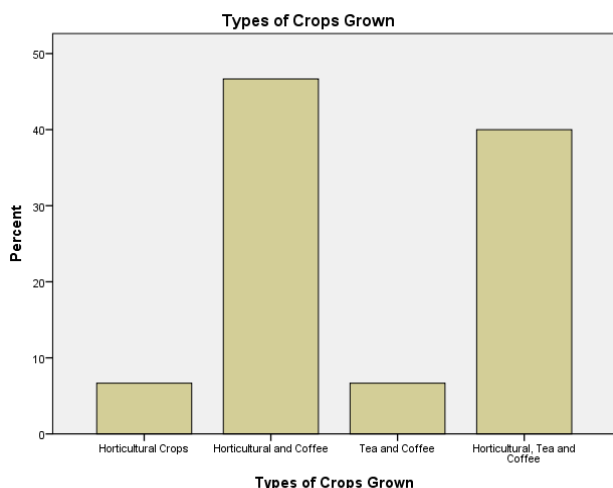


Figure 1 Interface Between Traditional and Cash Crops in Terms of Land Use

The respondents' views on the interface between traditional and cash crops in terms of land use in Kibugu varied according to figure 4.1 above with majority of respondents amounting to 46.7% indicated that they grow horticultural and coffee, 40% indicated that they grow horticultural, tea and coffee while 6.7% indicated that they grow tea and coffee and horticultural crops respectively. From the above findings it can be noted that majority of the farmers in Kibugu village mainly grow horticultural and coffee an indication of change of attitude towards horticultural crops which are slowly replacing the cash crops such as coffee and tea that used to be the major crops grown by farmers in the area. It was also noted that the traditional crops are becoming extinct since none of the interviewed respondents none stated that they still grow traditional crops. The horticultural crops grow quickly hence leading to faster income as opposed to cash crops. Coffee and tea have been the major cash crops in the area for a long time but this has changed over the years whereby there has been a shift to planting horticultural crops such as cabbages, potatoes and kales. This is mainly driven by the fact that majority of the land is controlled by men due to inherent cultural bias. So naturally women and the youth chose to grow horticultural crops which take less time to mature and produce yields compared to tea and coffee which take a longer duration and thus attract attention of the owners who are mostly men which raises questions of control for profits utilizations.

Table 1 Power Changes

	Range	Mean	Std. D	Variance
Bargaining Power	2.00	2.0000	.92582	.857
Chama (Group)	1.00	1.4000	.50709	.257
Credit Accessibility	3.00	2.3333	1.49603	2.238
Spending Type on Income	3.00	3.0000	.65465	.429

N=15

According to the above table on power changes in Kibugu location, the case of land ownership the mean was 1.4 with a std. deviation of 1.05560, a range of 3, and a variance of 1.114. For the case of method of land acquisition the mean was 2.2667 with a std. deviation of 0.70373, a range of 2, and a variance of 0.495. For the case of gender ownership of land a mean of 1, std. deviation of 0.00, range of 0 and a variance of 0. For the case of control of income a mean of 1.8, std. deviation of 1.20712, range of 3 and a variance of 1.457 and for the case of who gets the income a mean of 2.9333, std. deviation of 1.33452, a range of 5 and a variance of 1.781. However, the finding shows that most of the respondents do support that method of land acquisition is through inheritance while a few of them have opted on purchasing land. It can also be established that gender ownership of land is still biased and that the majority of land owners in Kibugu are male while the female gender has being left out hence becoming hard for them to gain control of land which then limits their control capacity on land, this in the long-term has led to lack of empowerment of women on horticultural farming. The lack of land ownership by women has also impacted negatively on the control of income and who gets the income from horticultural farming leading to exploitation of women's hard work by their lazy counterparts who control the income since they are the sole owners of the land, this has for a long time affected the power changes in Kibugu area.

Cash Crop Empowerment on Women and Youth

Table 2 Women and Youth Empowerment through Cash Crops

	Range	Mean	Std. D	Variance
Land Ownership	3.00	1.4000	1.05560	1.114
Method of Land Acquisition	2.00	2.2667	.70373	.495
Gender Ownership of Land	.00	1.0000	.00000	.000
Control of Income	3.00	1.8000	1.20712	1.457
Who gets the Income	5.00	2.9333	1.33452	1.781

The above table summarizes responses of how the new cash crops have empowered women and youth in Kibugu. For the case of bargaining power a mean of 2.0, std. deviation of 0.92582, range of 2 and a variance of 0.857. For the case of formation of *chamas* (Groups) the mean was 1.40, with a std. deviation of 0.50709, a range of 1 and a variance of 0.257. For the case of credit accessibility a mean of 2.33, std. deviation of 1.49603, range of 3 and a variance of 2.238 and for the case of spending type on income a mean of 3.0, std. deviation of 0.65465, range of 3 and a variance of 0.429. From the findings above most of the respondents do support that cash crops have empowered women and youth in Kibugu, *chamas* in the area are empowering youths and women through access of credit facilities and emotional support from the groups. They also get a lot of knowledge and information as well which turn to be very productive in

making wise decisions in farming and marketing their farm produce. Women and youth are nowadays involved in bargaining power of farm produce and also they are able to gather for their expenses such as school fees for their education and personal consumption. Increased literacy among women and youth has slowly impacted in addressing the imbalance of land ownership among local communities although its success has not yielded significant progress.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the land use pattern in Kibugu is slowly changing from use of land for growing cash crops to practicing horticulture which generates quick income for the locals. The adoption of horticultural crops farming has led to improved socio-economic status of many households who previously utilized their land for other purposes such as cash crop production. The fact that growing of horticultural crops takes less time than cash crops makes it easier for women and youth to utilize the available family land within a short time. This allows them to make good profits in comparison to utilization of the land for growing coffee or tea which creates conflict with men who control much of the household lands since the long crop maturity period coupled with the impact of climate change attract their attentions.

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