

Factors Contributing To Low Productivity and Food Insecurity in Bungoma County, Kenya

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Abstract

Food is a basic necessity of life. Food insecurity within households is a risk to people's livelihoods. Households in Bungoma county of Kenya were noted to be food insecure due to low productivity and this state threatened peoples' livelihoods. The objective of this study was to examine the physical, economic, environmental and social factors that led to low food production in Bungoma County, Kenya. A cross-sectional survey design was used in the study and a cluster (multi-stage random) sample size of 400 households were selected. Tools used for data collection were questionnaires, interview guides, focus group discussions and observation checklists. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study found that land size was small, road network was poor and market systems were disorganized. The cost of farm inputs was high as well as high poverty levels. Climatic variability affected crops and animal production. Social support, traditional beliefs and culture which discriminated against women were key risk factors that contributed to low farm production, making households food insecurity. Based on the findings, the study concluded that low farm productions were attributed to physical (Poor road networks and small land size), economic (poverty and high cost of farm inputs), environmental (climate variability and pests) and Social (cultural belief and negative attitude) factors. The study recommended that costs of farm inputs should be subsidized, improve road network system and sensitize people on positive cultural practices and attitude change to allow both gender participation on issues of food security. The outcome of the study will guide decision-makers at all levels in formulating food policies. Reliable and timely information on the incidence and causes of low productivity and food insecurity will be documented. Recommendations from the study will assist households understand factors affecting production and be able to appropriately plan their farming schedules.

Key Words: Farm Productivity, Household Food Insecurity, Bungoma County, Kenya